

ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE
THEOLOGICA ²⁰²⁴
Vol. 14, No. 1

THEME

Phenomenon and Revelation

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
KAROLINUM PRESS

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www.theologica.cz

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ISSN 1804-5588 (Print)

ISSN 2336-3398 (Online)

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INTRODUCTION

Neither philosophy nor Christian theology can avoid answering the question of their mutual relationship to each other, as they are thematically linked. Christian theology may – depending on the denomination – distance itself more or less from philosophy, but under no circumstances can it ignore current philosophical thought if it does not want to lose its connection to the central issues of the present. The same applies to philosophy, which, even when it denies any connection between man and transcendence, remains thematically linked to the question of God, in conscious distinction from the philosophy of religion or a philosophical doctrine of God. It is therefore always necessary to reflect anew on the relationship between reason and revelation.

From the perspective of philosophy, its relationship to theology varies according to its own methodological approach and presents itself differently. As the title ‘Phenomenon and Revelation’ suggests, this issue concentrates on the relationship between Christian theology and philosophical phenomenology. Naturally, it is not possible to define such a relationship comprehensively, as theology and phenomenology are highly differentiated within their respective spheres and the points of contact and discussions are now very heterogeneous. Nevertheless, this issue of *AUC Theologica* aims to provide an insight into the ways in which the two disciplines can co-operate with each other by means of three examples and to show that there is a great deal of potential for both sides to develop further.

The first contribution by Josef Wohlmuth is dedicated to Jean-Luc Marion’s approach, which attempts on the one hand to avoid the

accusation of theologising phenomenology and, on the other hand, to use the concepts of ‘donation’ and ‘saturated phenomenon (phénomène saturé)’ to identify strictly philosophical frameworks that make theological convictions appear plausible.

In the second article, the Protestant theologian Ivana Noble relates phenomenology to the concept of spiritual discernment in Ignatius of Loyola. In her essay, she shows the importance of phenomenology for a theology of spiritual experience by relating the concepts of illusion and resilience in spirituality.

In the third article, René W. Dausner, Reinhold Esterbauer, and Jakub Sirovátka address a current phenomenon, namely fear. This has obviously become increasingly important in recent years – not least due to the many crises. On the one hand, the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East are fuelling fears, while the Covid pandemic and the destruction of the environment are causing anxiety about the future. Furthermore, individual fears about one’s own health and livelihood have not decreased but increased. The now proverbial talk of ‘German anxiety’ is preoccupying the feature pages in the face of a ‘society in crisis mode’. Such and other fears about one’s own existence can be interpreted in different ways: psychologically, sociologically or politically, but also philosophically or theologically. In their essay, the three authors take Martin Heidegger’s and Emmanuel Levinas’ analyses of anxiety as a starting point and show how these are received in Karl Rahner’s theology, but also where there are limits to their transformation into theology.

In this way, this issue of *AUC Theologica* can serve as an example of how diverse the links between phenomenology and theology have become. Furthermore, it can inspire us to continue and deepen the dialogue that has long since begun.

René W. Dausner, Reinhold Esterbauer, Jakub Sirovátka

doi: 10.14712/23363398.2024.3

THEME

Phenomenon and Revelation

PHÄNOMENOLOGIE UND OFFENBARUNG BEI JEAN-LUC MARION

JOSÉF WOHLMUTH

ABSTRACT

Phenomenology and Revelation According to Jean-Luc Marion

The article explores the relationship between phenomenon and revelation, primarily on the basis of *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* by Jean-Luc Marion. The focus is on Marion's notion of givenness (inspired by Edmund Husserl), on which he bases his new type of phenomenology of givenness. In a critical discussion with Kant, it is shown that the so-called saturated phenomenon is neither constituted as an object nor can it be related back to an ego. The saturated phenomena show themselves of their own motion, they give themselves in their own non-reducibility. They can only be witnessed by the ego. Four types of such saturated phenomena are presented: event, idol, corporeity and icon. The highest degree of phenomenality is achieved in the phenomenon of revelation. Marion presents Jesus Christ as an example of a possible revelation. The manifestation of Jesus Christ stands for a phenomenon of revelation that unites all forms of saturation in itself, namely in the mode of paradox. The revelation in Jesus Christ is thus presented as a paradigm of a phenomenological revelation.

Keywords

Phenomenology; Revelation; Givenness; Saturated Phenomena; Jean-Luc Marion

DOI: 10.14712/23365398.2024.4

Vom Wortgebrauch her haben Theologie und Phänomenologie gemeinsam, dass sie sich um etwas bemühen, das wahrzunehmen ist, sei es ‚Gott selbst‘ (theós) oder dessen Erscheinung oder dessen Aufleuchten (Epiphanie, Offenbarung). Jean-Luc Marion hat als Philosoph, der auch mit der Theologie höchst vertraut ist, eine neue Gestalt der Phänomenologie vorgelegt, die zeigt, wie Edmund Husserl

in Frankreich rezipiert wurde und von dort aus in die Phänomenologie nach Deutschland zurückkehrte. Dabei rückte ein zentraler Grundbegriff der Phänomenologie Husserls ins Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit zurück. Es ist im Deutschen das Lexem ‚Gegebenheit‘ und im Französischen *donation*. Von Gottes Offenbarung zu sprechen setzt voraus, dass er sich selbst unverwechselbar in der Welt der Menschen offenbart. Jean-Luc Marion fragt sich in seinem Werk *Étant donné* (Paris 1997), das nun auch in deutscher Übersetzung mit dem Titel *Gegeben sei* (Freiburg – München 2013) vorliegt (= GS),¹ ob es sich in seiner Übernahme des Husserl’schen Terminus „Gegebenheit“ mit *donation* nicht um ein doppeldeutiges Spiel drehe. In der Widerlegung solcher Einwände hält Marion fest, dass er die sprachliche Doppeldeutigkeit von ‚Gegebenheit‘ bei Husserl keineswegs missverstanden habe. Vielmehr gehe es um einen Begriff, der ein bedrängendes Problem, dem man sich stellen müsse, signalisiert (GS § 6, 118f.). Die Doppeldeutigkeit hängt tatsächlich schon mit dem deutschen Wort ‚Gegebenheit‘ zusammen, das in der französischen Übersetzung das Verständnis erschwert, weil der Begriff im Französischen eine doppelte Verwendung hat: Mit *donation* kann einerseits ein Akt gemeint sein (das Geben), andererseits ein Worumwillen (die Gabe), vielleicht auch noch ein Akteur (der Geber) und schließlich „die Weise, wie sich das Gegebene erfüllt (der Charakter des Gegebenen)“, gemeint sein (GS, 119). Marion betont, dass diese möglichen Lesarten als Ausdruck einer verstrickten Vielfältigkeit entziffert werden müssen. Aber zunächst sei von der Doppeldeutigkeit des Gegebenheitsbegriffs schon bei Husserl auszugehen.

Auf den ersten Blick handelt es sich bei ‚Gegebenheit‘ zunächst ganz neutral um ein *datum*, d.h. etwas Gegebenes, das im Sinn von ‚gegebener Gabe‘ verstanden werden kann. Zum besseren Verständnis der Mehrdeutigkeit des Lexems *donation* geht Marion bei einem Gespräch in Paris mit Bonner Studierenden vom Beispiel einer Mathematik- oder Physikaufgabe aus, die den Prüflingen zur Lösung vorgelegt wird. In Form einer Aufgabe stellt sich also ein Sachproblem. Wer die Aufgabe stellt, muss ihre Lösung schon für möglich erachtet haben. An einen Prüfungskandidaten tritt die Aufgabe jedoch so heran, als sei er der

¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Gegeben sei. Entwurf einer Phänomenologie der Gegebenheit*, aus dem Französischen übersetzt von Thomas Alferi (Freiburg, München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2015).

Erste, der diese Aufgabe zu lösen hat. Mit entsprechenden Angaben, die von der ‚Gegebenheit‘ der Aufgabe herrühren, setzt die Aufgabe die Gegebenheit in Bewegung. „Angabe und Gegebenheit sind zwar nicht miteinander identisch, doch kann eine Angabe ohne Gegebenheit nicht gedacht werden“ (GS, 122f).² Die ‚Gegebenheit‘ steht in diesem Fall nur für das Ankommen der Aufgabe. Daraus ergibt sich dann aber eine grundlegende „Zwiefalt“ (*le plit de la donation*). Das bedeutet: „In Gegebenheit drückt sich ihr Ankommen aus, das untrennbar mit zu ihrer Selbstimmannenz gehört“ (GS, 123). Mit dem „Anbruchscharakter“ hängt aber der ‚Angabecharakter‘ zusammen, ja es gilt sogar: „Gegebenheit entfaltet lediglich den Angabecharakter als solchen“ (GS, 123). Nur so kann die Lösung einer Aufgabe herbeigeführt werden. „Gegebenheit ist nämlich der Definition des Gegebenen *als* Gegebenem eigen“ (GS, 124). Somit ist das Gegebene mit der Gegebenheit „gelenkhaft verbunden“ und bewahrt seine Immanenz. Gegebenes, Angaben und Daten (data) haben als solche Ereignischarakter. „Jedes Gegebene manifestiert Gegebenheit, weil es deren Ereignisgeschehen aufgefaltet“ (GS, 124). Es ist das Gegebene selbst, das die Zwiefalt der Gegebenheit in sich trägt. Letztlich gehe es sogar um die Frage, „ob ein Denken von Phänomenen im Ausgang von Gegebenheit möglich und notwendig“ (GS, 125) ist, d.h. „ob ein Denken ohne jene [Gegebenheit] überhaupt möglich sei“ (GS, 125).

Hier nun überprüft Marion erneut die Übersetzung des von Edmund Husserl verwendeten Begriffs ‚Gegebenheit‘. Marion schreibt: „Dort, wo Gegebenheit³ als Gegebenes (als Erscheinen) und Gegebenheit als Aufbruch dessen, was sich gibt, zusammenfallen, handelt es sich um die *Zwiefalt* von Gegebenheit“ (GS, 130). Damit kommt Husserls ursprüngliche Definition des Phänomens zur Geltung, die lautet: „Das Wort Phänomen ist doppelsinnig vermöge der wesentlichen Korrelation zwischen *Erscheinen* und *Erscheinendem*‘, jene Korrelation, die den

² Vgl. Jean-Luc Marion und Josef Wohlmuth, *Ruf und Gabe. Zum Verhältnis von Phänomenologie und Theologie* (Bonn: Borengässer, 2000), 29.

³ Marion musste sich die Frage gefallen lassen, ob die Verwendung eines einzigen Wortes (donation) ausreicht, um eine Zwiefalt von Bedeutung zu garantieren, wenn das Resultat von gebender Gegebenheit vom Prozess des Gebens zu unterscheiden ist (vgl. Marion, *Gegeben sei*, 125–150). Marions Antwort auf den Einwand hält fest, dass unter der Überschrift „Phänomene geben sich“ (Marion, *Gegeben sei*, 130) bereits vorweggenommen sei, was im folgenden Zweiten Buch mit dem zentralen Begriff ‚Gabe‘ noch im Einzelnen gezeigt wird (Marion, *Gegeben sei*, 133–212).

Blick eröffnet auf ‚zwei absolute Gegebenheiten [...], die Gegebenheit des Erscheinens und die Gegebenheit des Gegenstandes‘“ (Husserl, Zit. GS, 150).

Patrick Ebert bekräftigt in seinem bedeutenden Werk, *Offenbarung und Entzug*, die Theologie werde „gerade nicht von der Phänomenologie bestimmt [...], sondern im Ausgang vom Offenbarungsergebnis [...] wird über die Werkzeuge der Phänomenologie der Gegebenheit Offenbarung derart in den Blick genommen, dass eine neue Gestalt der Phänomenologie aus theologischen Gründen in den Blick kommt.“⁴ Marion zufolge sind Phänomene nicht bloßer Schein von anderem, sondern sie erscheinen als solche. Erscheinen muss sich somit durch sich [selbst] der Herrschaft apriorischer Erkenntnisbedingungen entwinden und erreichen, dass Erscheinendes leibhaft, nicht sein ‚Double‘ oder Repräsentant, aufbricht und sich den Zugang zum Schauspiel von Welt erkämpft. Vom Standpunkt des Erkennenden aus wird dieser Vorstoß Intentionalität genannt. Vom Standpunkt der Sache selbst erhält er die Überschrift der Gegebenheit. [...] Sie [Phänomene] kommen [in der Welt] insoweit an, als sie sich geben (GS, 131).

Um die theologische Tragweite der Phänomenologie bei Jean-Luc Marion zu ermessen, werfe ich einen Blick auf die beiden §§ 21 und 22 (GS, 341–358). Schon bei Emmanuel Levinas stand die Frage an, ob sich die Phänomenologie überhaupt auf die theologische Offenbarungslehre beziehen darf, ohne dem Verdacht der Theologisierung der Phänomenologie zu unterliegen. Doch auch umgekehrt steht zur Debatte, ob die Theologie ihrerseits versuchen könnte, die Phänomenologie theologisch zu unterwandern. Der Bezug auf Kants Verstandeskategorien kann hier für größere Klarheit sorgen. Die Schwierigkeiten, die sich dabei ergeben, könnten sehr schnell dazu führen, die Verstandeskategorien auszublenden und gleich auf die Phänomenologie der Urteilskraft einzugehen. Marion aber stellt sich mit Bedacht zuerst den Verstandeskategorien.

⁴ Patrick Ebert, *Offenbarung und Entzug. Eine theologische Untersuchung zur Transzendenz aus phänomenologischer Perspektive* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 311f.

1. Phänomenologische Kritik der Verstandeskategorien Immanuel Kants

Diese betreffen folgende Aspekte: Quantität, Qualität, Relation und insbesondere die in § 22 behandelte Modalität. Marion prüft dabei, ob sie überhaupt ein Gespräch mit der Theologie zulassen. Und geht davon aus, dass in den Verstandeskategorien das transzendentale Ich einzig und allein für die Konstituierung eines Gegenstandes zuständig ist. Bei der Klärung der ‚gesättigten Phänomene‘ geht es hingegen darum zu klären, ob nicht sogar Kant selbst verlangt, dass den Begriffen die Anschauung vorausgeht. Wenn dies zutrifft, so folgt bei Marion daraus das Programm: „Wir gehen den Verstandeskategorien also nach und kehren sie zugleich um“ (GS, 341). Die Umkehrung wird an den einzelnen Verstandeskategorien aufgezeigt.

Der *Quantität* nach (GS, 341–345) bestehen Phänomene nicht aus synthetisch zustande kommenden Einheiten, sondern sie bilden eine „prompte Synthesis“. Ein Beweis dafür ist das Staunen. Descartes zufolge gebe es eine Leidenschaft, die uns überfällt, ehe wir ein Ding erkennen oder Einzelheiten von ihm aufgezählt haben (vgl. GS, 342). Als weiteres Beispiel führt Marion die kubistische Malerei auf. Das Kunstwerk platzt gewissermaßen in seiner Sichtbarkeit auf.⁵

Der *Qualität* nach (GS, 345–351) geht es Kant um Phänomene „intensiver Größen“. „Sättigt Anschauung nämlich ein Phänomen, dann erreicht dies eine ‚intensive Größe‘, die jedes Maßes, jedes gemeinen Maßes entbehrt [...]“ (GS, 346). Solche Größe von *Anschauung* kann so intensiv sein, dass sie als gesättigtes Phänomen „vom Blick nicht ausgehalten werden [kann]“ (GS, 346f.). In diesem Fall „widerfährt ihm eine Blendung“ (GS, 347). Ein anderes Beispiel ist das Gewicht oder die Schwere. Dafür steht der hebr. Begriff *kabod*, der über alles Wiegen hinaus den Glanz oder die Herrlichkeit des Sichtbaren und auch des unsichtbaren Gottes meint (vgl. 347). Schließlich ist es die Liebe, wozu Marion schreibt: „Wer sich jemals von Liebe ergriffen erfahren hat, der verdankt dies zumeist nur einem unmerklichen Blick, den nur

⁵ Nach intensiverem Studium des vorliegenden Werkes Marions und einer Reihe von Gesprächen mit ihm bin ich zu der Einsicht gekommen, dass Marions phänomenologische Analysen über ‚gesättigte Phänomene‘ und die Paradoxie der ‚Offenbarung‘ Fragen aufwerfen, die weit über das hinausgehen, was in den phänomenologischen Versuchen etwa der Neuinterpretation der Realpräsenz vorliegt.

er – und niemand anders – gesehen hat. Und derjenige, den niemand sehen kann, ohne zu sterben, macht zuerst durch seine Heiligkeit blind, selbst wenn sich sein Kommen in einem einfachen Windhauch ankündigt“ (GS, 347). Hier denkt Marion offensichtlich an die Gottesbegegnung des Elias am Horeb. Dann stellt Marion ein Paradigma aus der Kunst vor. Es sei nämlich der Maler, der mit dem Licht so umgehen kann, dass größte Kontraste an Farbe aufeinandertreffen, wie Marion an Claude Lorrains Gemälden darlegt (348). „Endlichkeit wird nicht so sehr dadurch erfahren und aufgewiesen, dass vor unserem Blick dürtig Gegebenes steht, sondern in erster Linie deshalb, weil dieser Blick zuweilen die Reichweite von Gegebenem nicht mehr ermessen kann. [...] Endlichkeit lässt sich besser vor dem Hintergrund gesättigter als vor dem dürtiger Phänomenen aufdecken“ (GS, 350f.). Die Aspekte ‚Herrlichkeit‘, ‚Liebe‘ und ‚Heiligkeit‘ der Gottbegegnung sowie der Verweis auf ein Gemälde geben schon einen Wink auf die gesättigten Phänomene und ihre theologische Bedeutung.

Der *Relation* nach (351–354) gilt: „Erfahrung ist nur durch die Vorstellung einer notwendigen Verknüpfung der Wahrnehmung möglich“ (Kant, Zit. GS, 351). Diese Verknüpfung muss innerhalb der Zeit und zugleich über Begriffe hervorgebracht werden. Da die Zeit als solche nicht wahrnehmbar ist, wird die Verknüpfung der Begriffe nur *a priori* durch das Ich gewährleistet. In der ursprünglichen Erfahrung soll – Kant zufolge – alles Mannigfaltige „seinen Zeitverhältnissen nach, vereinigt werden“ (Kant, Zit. GS, 351). Insofern müsste ein vorgegebenes Koordinatensystem vorentscheiden, wann ein Phänomen erscheinen kann. Im Gegensatz zu Kants transzendentalem Ansatz gelten – Marion zufolge – Phänomene als reine Ereignisse (vgl. §§ 16 und 17), weil es um „absolute, einzigartige, heranretende Phänomene“ geht. Wie aber kann der Ausarbeitungsvorgang, „über den die zeitliche und begriffliche Notwendigkeit und also die Erfahrungseinheit gewährleistet werden soll“ (GS, 352), aussehen?⁶ Marion zufolge müssen alle Formen apriorischer Erfahrungsbedingungen, die sich mit Anspruch auferlegen, überwunden werden. „In diesem Sinne sprechen wir von einem absoluten Phänomen, ist es doch von jeder Analogie mit irgendeinem Erfahrungsgegenstand losgebunden“ (GS, 354).⁷

⁶ Auf die dezidierte Analyse, die Marion bei Kant vorlegt, muss hier verzichtet werden. Ich halte nur Marions Ergebnis fest.

⁷ Vgl. weiterführend Thomas Alferi, „Von der Offenbarungsfrage zu Marions Phänomenologie der Gebung,“ in *Von der Ursprünglichkeit der Gabe* (Freiburg, München:

Im Blick auf die *Relation* (354–358) wird Kants Voraussetzung besonders fragwürdig, weil sie lautet, die „Einheit von Erfahrung soll sich vor dem Hintergrund der Zeit entfalten“ (GS, 354). Es gilt für Kant nämlich der Satz: „Alle Erscheinungen sind in der Zeit“ (Kant, Zit. GS 354). Marion interpretiert diese Maxime folgendermaßen:

Damit richtet Kant nicht nur die Zeit als Letzthorizont der Phänomene ein, sondern vor allem auch einen Horizont überhaupt, der das Erscheinen dieser Phänomene (die er empfängt und zugleich einschränkt) bedingt. Dies bedeutet: Noch bevor die Phänomene in die Sichtbarkeit vorstoßen, werden sie bereits von einem Horizont erwartet. (GS, 354)

Analogielose Phänomene (354–358) im letzten Abschnitt des § 21 betrifft detailliert die Bedeutung des Zeit- und Horizontproblems. Es bleibt immer noch die Frage nach der „Identität dieses Horizontes (Zeit, Sein, das *Ereignis*, ja das ethische Verhältnis oder das Gute usw.). Doch dabei darf eine andere, einfachere und radikalere Frage nicht überdeckt werden: Könnten bestimmte Phänomene nicht ihren Horizont überschreiten?“ (GS, 354f.). Dieser Frage geht Marion nach. In drei Szenen zeigt er, wie sich *Anschauung* in den Grenzen des Horizonts verhält. Das erste Beispiel betrifft eine Anschauung, die den begrifflich vorgegebenen Rahmen überflutet. Das zweite Beispiel behandelt ein von *Anschauung* gesättigtes Phänomen, das die Grenzen seines Begriffs erreicht, dann aber jede Horizontbegrenzung überschreitet. Der dritte Fall, der selten, aber unvermeidlich ist, betrifft die beiden folgenden §§ 23 und 24, die bereits das Offenbarungsphänomen berühren. Es erscheint als „ein Phänomen [...], das in einem solchen Maß gesättigt wäre, dass die Welt (in allen Bedeutungen des Wortes) es nicht akzeptieren könnte. Es kam zu den Seinen, aber die Seinen haben es nicht erkannt“ (GS, 357f.) (vgl. Joh 1,10). Marion folgert im Übergang zu den gesättigten Phänomenen:

So geben sich gesättigte Phänomene, wenn sie sich absolut geben, auch als Absolute, sie geben sich als von jeder bereits gesehenen, gegenständlich gemachten, verstandenen Erfahrung Befreite. Sie befreien sich davon,

Verlag Karl Alber, 2007), 210–233, hier bes. 224–227. Vgl. ebd. auch Marions Aufsätze, bes. seinen Beitrag: „Die Phänomenalität des Sakraments. Wesen und Gegebenheit,“ 78–95.

insofern sie von keinem Horizont abhängen. In all diesen Fällen hängen sie von dieser schlechthinnigen Möglichkeitsbedingung, von einem Horizont – welcher auch immer es sein mag – nicht ab. Wir nennen sie daher unbedingte Phänomene. (GS, 358)

Kant mache die Zeit zum Letzthorizont der Phänomene und vor allem auch zum Horizont überhaupt. Marion zeigt z. B., dass eine Anschauung durch Blendung noch innerhalb eines Horizontes vollziehbar ist (vgl. GS, 355). Auch Platons Welt der Wahrheit als Glanz des Unsichtbaren gehört dazu (357). Auch sie bewegt sich innerhalb eines Horizontes. In *Gegeben sei* (§ 20) schreibt Marion schon: „Phänomene werden von der Anschauung gegeben, doch diese Anschauung bleibt – entweder als sinnliche (Kant) oder als zumeist mangelhafte oder ideale (Husserl) – eine endliche“ (GS, 355). Den anschauungsarmen Phänomenen (§ 20), das mit dem Schlussabschnitt in ‚Überschuss‘ bereits zu den Phänomenen der Anschauungsfülle überleitet, stellt sich die Frage, ob es nicht auch Phänomene gibt, „bei denen die Anschauung *mehr, ja unermesslich mehr* geben würde als das, was die Intention jemals angezielt oder vorhergesehen hätte“ (GS, 336). Immanuel Kant, den Marion einen „Denker des Anschauungsmangels“ (GS, 337) nennt, habe aber bereits geahnt, dass es so etwas wie ‚gesättigte Phänomene‘ gibt, welche die Anschauung bis ins Unendliche übersteigen. Wenn es diese aber gibt, dann wird ihre theologische Bedeutung auf der Hand liegen.

Von Kants Verstandeskategorien fehlt jetzt noch die letzte Kategorie, die Marion unter dem Titel „Das *Ich*-Problem“ (GS, 359) behandelt. „Der Modalität nach beobachtbar“ (GS, 359–363): Marion zufolge führt das „kantische Verständnis der Modalitätskategorien [...] zuletzt zu einer Entfremdung der Phänomene von sich selbst. Weit davon entfernt, *sich* zu geben, lassen sie sich zeigen, werden sie sichtbar gemacht und vorgeführt. Kurz: Sie lassen sich als Gegenstand [...] konstituieren [...]“ (GS, 360). Marion richtet deshalb an Kant die Frage, ob es sich hier überhaupt noch um ‚gesättigte Phänomene‘ handelt (vgl. GS, 361). Denn von gesättigten Phänomenen gilt, dass sie als nicht zu vergegenständlichende Phänomene zu bestimmen sind, ohne dass dies eine Flucht ins Irrationale bedeuten würde. Weiter fragt Marion, wie zu verstehen sei, „dass *sich* etwas zu sehen gibt, ohne sich beobachten zu lassen“ (GS, 362). Damit kommt Marion in der nicht ganz einfachen Kantinterpretation auf die Unterscheidung zwischen ‚sehen‘ (lat. *videre*)

und ‚beobachten‘ (lat. intueri) zu sprechen, auf die ich hier nicht näher eingehe. Beide seien aufeinander angewiesen. ‚Beobachten‘ meint, was „im Auge behalten“ wird und zur Überwachung tendiert. ‚Phänomene beobachten‘ ist jedoch nicht gleichzusetzen mit ‚Phänomene sehen‘.

Gegenerfahrung (GS, 362–365): Phänomene müssen schlecht-hin erscheinen. Gegenerfahrung (oder Widerfahrnis) bedeutet nicht Nicht-Erfahrung. Vielmehr geht es um die Erfahrung eines Phänomens, das nicht beobachtet werden kann. Steht aber das Ich einem gesättigten Phänomen gegenüber, so kann es dies nicht nicht-sehen. Was aber sieht ein Auge ohne Beobachterblick? Marions Antwort lautet eindeutig:

Es sieht die Überfülle gegebener Anschauung. Oder besser noch: Es sieht diese gerade nicht klar und deutlich als solche, verunmöglicht der Über-schuss doch ihre Beobachtung und erschwert er ihre Beherrschung. Den-noch lässt sich das im Phänomen Anschauliche durchaus sehen – dies aber wie durch eine zu kurze Linse, zu enge Blende, einen zu ihrem Emp-fang zu knappen Bildrahmen oder besser: einen Bildrahmen, der es nicht als solches empfangen kann. (GS, 364)

Das Auge sieht nicht, besonders sieht es keinen Gegenstand. Viel-mehr empfindet das Auge sein Unvermögen, das Unmaß dessen, was es sieht und was sich als Verblendung der Endlichkeit erweist, zu beherr-schen. Es geht eben um keinen beherrschbaren Gegenstand. Jean-Luc Marion führt – fast überraschend – als Beispiel das Musikhören an. Die Ouvertüre – z. B. der Jupitersinfonie von Mozart – erreicht den/die Hörenden in einer Weise, dass diese mit ihrer Klangfülle bereits mit dem noch nicht gehörten Ganzen dieses Werkes konfrontiert werden. „Die Musik stellt die Bewegung selbst dar, wie sie herantritt, wie sie auf mich [...] wirkt, kurz, wie sie ohne sachlichen Inhalt aufbricht“ (GS, 365). Dies gilt, auch wenn die Erinnerung an ein früheres Hören dieser Musik nachwirkt. Marion folgert deshalb daraus: „Wir werden diese phänomenologische Extremfigur, bei der das Herantreten das Herangetretene überbordet, eine *Paradoxie* nennen“ (GS, 365).

Die *Paradoxie und der Zeuge* (GS, 365–369): Bisher wurde eine Skizze des gesättigten Phänomens bis zu dem Punkt verfolgt, an dem sich das Ich-Problem stellt. Marion geht davon aus, dass sich die gesättigten Phänomene weder auf begrenzte Horizonte noch auf ein konstituiertes Ich zurückführen lassen. Das Ich „wird der Synthesis

gegenüber passiv“ (GS, 366) und „verliert seine Vorgängigkeit als *Ichpol*“ (GS, 366). Es kommt zu einem „Sich-Geben“, das durch das Ich nur noch bezeugt, nicht aber konstituiert werden kann. Dadurch geht in zeitlicher Perspektive der Anruf in jeder Hinsicht dem Ich ereignishaft voraus, kommt ihm gewissermaßen schon zuvor. Saturierte Phänomene lassen sich nicht beobachten, darin erweist sich ihre Nicht-Reduzierbarkeit. Solche Phänomene ohne Horizontbegrenzung und ohne Reduktion auf das Ich widersprechen dem „Prinzip aller Prinzipien“ (Husserls und auch schon Kants), denn es gilt: „Allein gesättigte Phänomene erscheinen wahrhaft als sie selbst, von selbst und von sich selbst her, weil nur sie ohne Begrenzung durch einen Horizont oder ohne sich auf ein *Ich* zu reduzieren erscheinen, und weil nur sie sich selbst konstituieren, insofern als sie *sich* als ein *Sich* geben“ (GS, 368f.).

Gesättigte Phänomene im Sinn der Paradoxien, die von sich selbst ausgehen, müssen sich keinerlei Stimmung unterwerfen. Wie Marion Kant über Kant hinausführt, verfolge ich hier nicht im Einzelnen. Ich halte nur fest: Eine solche rein aus „sich selbst ausgehende Erscheinung, deren Möglichkeit sich absolut keiner vorangehenden Bestimmung unterwirft“ (GS, 369), nennt Jean-Luc Marion „Selbstmanifestation“ (GS, 369; kurs. J. W.). Dies ist für die Frage nach der Offenbarung erneut ein sehr wichtiges Ergebnis.⁸

2. Bedeutung der Vernunftideen für die gesättigten Phänomene – drei Beispiele der Philosophiegeschichte (GS, 369–373)

Es ist für das Verständnis der gesättigten Phänomene hilfreich, sich den folgenden Analysen zuzuwenden (GS, 369–373), weil sie gerade auch für die Theologie der Offenbarung höchst aufschlussreich sind. Hier wird nämlich deutlich, wie nah die Philosophie an das Problem des Unendlichen heranrückt und zeigt, dass die Frage nach Gott und Offenbarung davon zutiefst betroffen ist.

René Descartes reduziert Phänomene zwar auf Ideen, denkt aber die ‚Idee des Unendlichen‘ als ein gesättigtes Phänomen; denn zu dieser Idee kommt man nicht durch quantifizierendes Summieren oder

⁸ Vgl. zu Marions Kantinterpretation: Claudia Serban, „Jean-Luc Marion als Leser Kants“, in *Jean-Luc Marion: Studien zum Werk* (Dresden: Verlag Text & Dialog, 2013), 199–215. Vgl. zu den philosophischen Weichenstellungen bei Marion: Ebert, *Offenbarung und Entzug*, 262–314. Kant spielt dabei allerdings keine herausragende Rolle.

Synthetisieren (von Quantitäten), sondern tota simul. Der Beobachterblick (intueri) wird zur Bewunderungshaltung (*admirari*). Bezüglich der Qualität geht Descartes bei der Idee des Unendlichen nie von einer Nullstufe oder einer endlichen Stufe aus, sondern immer von einem Maximum (*maxime clara et distincta*). Der Relation nach steht die Idee des Unendlichen zu keiner anderen Idee in einem analogen, d.h. vergleichbaren Verhältnis (*nihil univoce*), weil sie jeden Horizont übersteigt. Die Idee des Unendlichen ist unfasslich und lässt sich vom Denken nur berühren (*attingam quomodolibet cogitatione*). Schließlich lässt sie sich der Modalität nach „auf kein konstituierendes *Ich* zurückführen“ (GS, 370). (Selbst bei Kant lässt sich das Erhabene in unserer Urteilskraft nicht auf das Ich reduzieren.)

Zu *Immanuel Kant* wurde oben schon angedeutet, dass bei ihm die ästhetische Idee eine „inexponibile Vorstellung der Einbildungskraft“ sei (§ 57). Dies bedeutet Marion zufolge, „dass die überreiche Anschauung nicht mehr durch irgendwelche apriorischen Regeln exponiert werden kann, sondern dass sie diese überflutet“ (GS, 339). Bekanntlich handelt es sich bei Kant um „das Spiel des Erhabenen“ (GS, 339). Die ästhetische Idee betrifft also nicht nur die Schönheit als *splendor veri*, sondern überspielt diesen Glanz noch, sei es, dass die Wahrheit als schöner Schein entlarvt wird, sei es, dass die ästhetische Idee den Zugang zur wahren Unendlichkeit eröffnet, ohne diesen begrifflich noch fassen zu können. Damit stößt Kant auf eine Dimension, die für die Umschreibung der Sinnlichkeit von großer Bedeutung ist; Marion nennt sie ‚gesättigte Phänomene‘. In § 21 wird das „gesättigte Phänomen“ zugleich mit dem „Horizontproblem“ behandelt, welch letzteres für die Phänomenologie besonders wichtig erscheint (GS, 354–358).

Bei Marion ist das Erhabene bei Kant zwar im Sinn eines gesättigten Phänomens zu verstehen, doch es gehört nicht in den Bereich rationaler Theologie wie bei Descartes, sondern in „den Vollzug endlicher Vermögen“ (GS, 370). Der Quantität nach ist das Erhabene weder Form noch Ordnung; es ist groß ohne Vergleichung. Der Qualität nach ist das Erhabene bei Kant eine „negative Lust“ (GS, 370) und läuft als solche „dem Geschmack zuwider und ruft ein ‚Gefühl der Unangemessenheit‘, der Ungeheuerlichkeit hervor“ (GS, 370). Der Relation nach entzieht sich das Erhabene „ganz eindeutig jedem Analogieverhältnis und jedem Horizont“ (GS, 370f.). Das Erhabene repräsentiert das ‚Unbegrenzte‘ selbst. Der Modalität nach deckt sich das Erhabene nicht mit unserem Erkenntnisvermögen, „sondern mag, der Form nach

[...] zweckwidrig für unsere Urteilskraft [...] erscheinen“ (GS, 371). Es sind also die Phänomene, „die das *Ich* voller ‚Achtung‘ ‚beobachtet‘“ (GS, 371).⁹

Edmund Husserl ist es schließlich, bei dem das innere Zeitbewusstsein sich als gesättigtes Phänomen ausweist, das nicht mehr Kants Verständnis eines unveränderbaren Zeithorizonts folgt. Der Quantität nach manifestiert sich die Zeit als unanvisierbar und somit als unvorhersehbar. Der Fluss der Zeit verbietet es, von einer Homogenität der Zeitabschnitte auszugehen. „Jeder Teilabschnitt besteht hier ja nur aus der ‚Kontinuität steter Wandlungen‘ [Zit. Husserl] jedes Augenblickes und gleitet – sich unablässig verwandelnd – von der Zukunft in die Gegenwart und von der Gegenwart in die Vergangenheit“ (GS, 371). Der Qualität nach erweist sich die Zeit als unerträglich, da sie keine Stufengrade kennt. Der Fluss der Zeit kennt keinen Null- und Erstpunkt (vgl. 371f.). Der für die Zeitlichkeit verantwortliche Fluss, der selbst keine Dauer hat, erlaubt keine Quantitätsstufen. „Der Relation nach gilt: Die Zeit bleibt ein Absolutes“ (GS, 372). Anders als bei Kant zeigt sich die Zeit bei Husserl in sich und durch sich und zwar absolut, d.h. „ohne dass Relationen zu oder zwischen Gegenständen bestünden“ (GS, 372). Was schließlich die Modalität betrifft, lässt sich die Zeit nicht beobachten. Zeit von sich selbst her ist ‚das absolut Unmodifizierte‘. Zeit wird nicht erzeugt, sondern ist selbst Urzeugung. Daraus folgt bei Marion – schon in § 22 – für Husserl:

Die Zeit lässt sich nicht beobachten. In ihrer Eigenschaft als ‚Urimpression‘ erlegt sich Zeit nämlich von sich selbst her als ‚das absolut Unmodifizierte‘ [Husserl] auf, das,... nicht erzeugt‘ [Husserl] wird, sondern selbst ‚Urzeugung‘ ist. Die Urimpression bestimmt ursprünglich das Bewusstsein, das nunmehr seinen Ursprungstatus verliert, um sich als ursprünglich Bestimmtes, Beeindrucktes, Konstituiertes, als unter transzentaler Hinsicht zum Zeugen Bestelltes zu entdecken. (GS, 372f.)

⁹ Die ästhetische Idee betrifft bei Kant nicht nur die Schönheit als *splendor veri*. Vielmehr überspielt er diesen Glanz noch dadurch, dass die Wahrheit als schöner Schein entlarvt wird und die ästhetische Idee auf diese Weise den Zugang zur wahren Unendlichkeit eröffnet, ohne diesen begrifflich noch fassen zu können. Letztlich handelt es sich hier um die Dimension des Erhabenen. Vgl. R. Hoeps, *Das Gefühl des Erhabenen und die Herrlichkeit Gottes. Studien zur Beziehung von philosophischer und theologischer Ästhetik* (Würzburg: Echter, 1989), (BDS 5).

Ich füge hier einen weiteren Aspekt an, der den mehrmals verwen-deten Begriff der Urimpression betrifft und bei Marion in § 25 aufgegrif-fen wird. Diese wird von Marion im Kontext formaler Einwände gegen das empirische Mich (GS, 421–424) erklärt, wobei Marion zeigt, dass bei Husserl die Urimpression der lebendigen Zeit das Erste „und nicht [sc. wie bei Kant] die synthetische Einheit der Afferenz“ (GS, 422) ist. Das ‚Ich denke‘ wird zu einem ‚Ich werde affiziert‘ in der Anschauung, „und zwar durch einen sich ständig erneuernden Augenblick, der aber ganz und gar ohne Vorläufer ist [...]“ (GS, 422). Die Urimpression gibt den Zugang zur Zeitlichkeit frei, die vorausgesetzt und nicht her-vorgebracht wird. „Die Urimpression tritt nur ein, weil sie sich durch-gehend und ohne etwas Objektivierbares gibt. Daher tritt sie auch nur in dem Maße in die Phänomenalität ein, wie ihre Gegebenheit als das alleinige Ursprungereignis empfangen wird“ (GS, 423). An die Stelle des ‚Ich denke‘ tritt somit der zitierte Ausdruck: ‚Ich werde affiziert‘. Es geht hier

um eine [...] vollständige Umkehrung, die der ganzen Subjektivität durch die irreduzible Urimpression der Zeit auferlegt wird. Dieses besondere und absolut einzigartige Phänomen erlegt nicht nur dem transzendentalen *Ich* auf, sich definitiv dem empirischen ‚Mich‘ zu fügen, sondern auch dem empirischen ‚Mich‘, sich seinen Vorrang allein von der Rezeptivität für Gegebenheit her zusichern zu lassen, sich ihr also völlig zu unterwerfen. (GS, 423)

Im gesättigten Phänomen handelt es sich also – abschließend festge-halten – um keine seltsame Hypothese, sondern „um eine [...] wesent-hafte Gestalt von Phänomenalität“ (GS, 373). Marion zufolge – so heißt es im letzten Satz seiner Analysen, „kann nur ein gesättigtes Phäno-men – durch sein exzessives Sich-Sichtbarmachen – die paradoxerwei-se unmäßigen Dimensionen möglicher [...] Gegebenheit zutage treten lassen“ (GS, 373).

3. Von den gesättigten zu den paradoxen Phänomenen (GS 365–391)

Im § 22 findet sich die Überschrift „Die Paradoxie und der Zeuge“ (GS, 365). In GS, 379–382 geht es Marion um den Hinweg von den gesät-tigten zu den paradoxen Phänomenen. Es sind jene Phänomene, die

sich dadurch auszeichnen, dass auch schon die intentionale Erwartung stets von der (sinnlichen) Anschauung überflutet wird. Der Terminus ‚Paradoxie‘ besagt, „dass Anschauung in ihr einen Überschuss entfaltet, den Begriffe nicht (ein)ordnen und Intentionen nicht voraussehen können“ (GS, 379). Solche Anschauungen gehen der Intention voraus, ja stürzen sie um, überschwemmen und dezentrieren sie. „Die Sichtbarkeit des Scheinenden bricht so in Gegenrichtung zur Intention hervor“ (GS, 379). Das griechische Wort *parádoxos* bedeutet „was der Meinung widerspricht, unerwartet, ungeheuerlich; wunderbar“ (WNT, Spalte 1221). Gemeint ist damit, was über die übliche Meinung, die bloße Erscheinung oder den bloßen Schein hinausgeht. Insofern rückt das Lexem ‚Paradox(ie)‘ sogar in die Nähe der Wahrheit oder wenigstens deren Anspruch. All diese Paradoxien „[lassen] sich nie innerhalb eines Horizontes oder über ein *Ich* als Gegenstände konstituieren [...]“ (GS, 382). Genau diese Art der gesättigten Phänomene spielen in den Aufsätzen Marions eine entscheidende Rolle. Bezüglich der Topik gegebener Phänomene unterscheidet Marion, ohne zu hierarchisieren, „vier Typen gesättigter Phänomene“ (GS, 382), die kurz vorgestellt werden sollen.

(a) Ereignis (GS, 383–385)

Die Phänomene solchen Typs treten zunächst als Geschichtsphänomene oder Ereignisse hervor und sättigen dabei die Kategorie der (mengenhaften) Quantität. Niemand hat eine bestimmte Schlacht wie Waterloo gesehen oder sie als solche gemacht. Eine Schlacht geschieht gleichsam wie von selbst. Versucht man sie historisch zu analysieren, tun sich viele Horizonte auf, unter denen sich ein historisches Phänomen erblicken lässt. Dabei wird die Erkenntnis von Geschichtsereignissen selbst geschichtlich. Die Vielzahl von Horizonten, welche die eine Schlacht bestimmen, lassen es nicht zu, dass der Historiker daran „einen Gegenstand konstituiert“ (GS, 384), statt unzählige Verstehensversuche zu ermöglichen, die zur Erzählung und Erzählung von Erzählung usw. werden.

(b) Idol (GS, 385–387)

Solche Phänomene zeichnen sich aus durch ihre Unerträglichkeit, ja Blendung, und betreffen als solche die Kategorie der Qualität. Mit dem Ausdruck ‚Idol‘ kennzeichnet Marion den ersten und außer Zweifel stehenden „Anhaltspunkt von Sichtbarkeit, dessen Glanz die

Intentionalität erstmalig zum Stehen bringt“ (GS, 385). Paradigmatisch kann darunter etwa ein Gemälde fallen und somit ein ästhetisches Gebilde als Phänomen der Kunst. Dabei ist jetzt allerdings nicht das Kunstwerk als solches gemeint, sondern das, was man unter Kunstbetrachtung versteht. Da genügt ein einmaliges Sehen nicht. In jedem Fall übersteigt die Anschauung stets die zu ihrer Einholung vorgebrachten Begriffe. Das schauende Ich nimmt wahr, dass das Wesentliche der Sichtbarkeit verdeckt bleibt. Je mehr – sogar auch Fachleute – ein Gemälde analysieren, umso weniger wird dessen „Gegebenheit selbst zugänglich“ (GS, 386). Deshalb fragt sich, mit welcher Autorität das Kunstwerk den Besucher vorlädt, sodass er „zu seinem Sehen antrete“ (GS, 386), gleichsam dazu gezwungen wird. Ein Gemälde öfter anzusehen bedeutet nicht, der vorausgehenden Anschauung eine weitere anzufügen, „sondern bedeutet, neugewonnene Begriffe bzw. Intentio-nen mit der unendlichen/unbegrenzten Anschauung zu konfrontieren [...]“ (GS, 386). Das Idol zwingt zu einer unablässigen Änderung des Blicks, sei es auch, um einer Blendung zu entgehen. Ein Gemälde, das den Betrachter einlädt, es anzuschauen, macht ihn dabei vor ihm zum Individuum. Idole bezeichnen den Ort, an dem ich stehe, wobei der Begriff die Anschauung stets verfehlt ist oder die Anschauung überhaupt fehlt.

(c) Leib (GS, 387–389)

Die Phänomene des dritten Typs treten „unter dem absoluten Aspekt der Leiblichkeit ein, insofern diese sich der Kategorie der Relation entzieht“ (GS, 387). Leiblichkeit ist dabei zu verstehen als „Identität zwischen dem Berührenden und dem Feld, in dem dieses Berühren stattfindet (Aristoteles), also als Identität des Empfundenen mit dem Empfindenden (Husserl), sowie auch des Gesehenen mit dem Seh- oder des Gehörten mit dem Hörvermögen, kurz gesagt, des Affizierten mit dem Affizierenden (Henry)“ (GS, 387). Das Empfangen von ursprünglichen oder abgeleiteten Impressionen geht anderen Bewusstseinsereignissen voraus. Das erscheint möglich, „insofern das Bewusstsein sich in sich selbst radikal affizieren lässt (*Selbstaffektion*)“ (GS, 387f.; kurs. J. W.). Letzteres setzt voraus, dass es keine zuvor vorhandenen Affekte gibt, die von außen einwirken. Die Selbstaffektion muss sich bedingungslos vollziehen. Der Leib affiziert sich selbst, und zwar „im Sterben, Leiden, Schmerz“ (GS, 388) aber auch „in der Sehnsucht, Empfindung, im Orgasmus“ (GS, 388). Die Affekte affizieren sich

selbst ursprünglich und je zuerst, woher sie auch kommen mögen: „Freude oder Leid, Gewissheit von Liebe (auf den ersten Blick) oder lebendige Erinnerung (nach Proust), aber auch der sich als Angst vor dem Nichts äußernde Gewissensruf (nach Heidegger) oder jenes ‚Furcht und Zittern‘ (nach Kierkegaard), kurz, das *numen* im Allgemeinen [...]“ (GS, 388). Viele andere Affektionen „[unterstehen] dem Leib und seiner Selbstimmortalisierung“ (GS, 388). Zur Selbstaffektion gehört eine Unmittelbarkeit, die sich gegen jede Räumlichkeit verwehrt. Weiter „ruft die Leiblichkeit einen Solipsismus hervor [...]“ (GS, 388). Niemand kann für mich Freude oder Leid erfahren. „Jemeinigkeit betrifft nicht zuerst oder ausschließlich meine Möglichkeit als Möglichkeit der Unmöglichkeit (das Sterben [bei Heidegger]), sondern meine Leiblichkeit“ (GS, 389). Im Vergleich zu Geschichtsereignissen und Idolen „zeigt sich mir Leiblichkeit nur im Sich-Geben – und als dieses erste ‚Sich‘ gibt sie mich mir selbst“ (GS, 389). Man könnte diesen Aspekt des gesättigten Phänomens auch als Intensivform aller sinnlichen Ästhetik benennen. An diesem Punkt trifft sich die Ästhetik der Sinnlichkeit mit der Phänomenologie gesättigter Phänomene und Paradoxien.

(d) Ikone (GS, 389–391)

Marion macht selbst aufmerksam auf seine ausführlichere Studie in *Gott ohne Sein*.¹⁰ Die Ikone als gesättigtes Phänomen betrifft die Unbeobachtbarkeit und Irreduzibilität auf den Ich-Bezug oder die Modalitätskategorien. Die Ikone bietet dem Blick keinerlei Schauspiel mehr an. Während im Idol Gott zum Bild des Menschen gemacht werden kann, an dem der menschliche Blick sich festmacht (und damit sich darin selbst sieht und nach seinem eigenen Bild Gottes Bild macht), ist die Ikone grundsätzlich das Bild des Unsichtbaren. Hier tritt der Beobachter „an die Stelle des Beobachteten“ (GS, 389) und so verkehrt sich das Phänomen „in eine Manifestation“ (GS, 389), die als Selbstmanifestation geschieht. Die Anamorphose¹¹ erhält ihre schlechthinnige Ausdrucksgestalt, wobei die Anschauung in diesem Fall völlig anders verläuft als beim Idol. Der wie ein Ereignis eintreffende Blick führt zu keiner Anschauung, die unmittelbar zu sehen wäre. Der Blick, den

¹⁰ Vgl. franz., Jean-Luc Marion, *Dieu sans l'être* (Paris: Quadrige, 1991); vgl. dt., Jean-Luc Marion, *Gott ohne Sein* (Paderborn u.a.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014), 25–47.

¹¹ Vgl. Marion, *Gegeben sei*, 220–222. Anamorphose bedeutet ein fortschreitendes Sehen einer Erscheinungsform, und zwar von der Erstform zur Zweitform, gewissermaßen mit einem zweiten Blick (und weiteren Blicken).

der Andere mir zuwirft und mir aufbürdet, „gibt sich mir also nicht zur Beobachtung, ja nicht einmal zum Sehen“ (GS, 390). Der unsichtbare Blick, der mich trifft, gibt sich mir vielmehr „zu seiner Erduldung“ (GS, 390). Marion fügt gleich hinzu, der Andere sei – Emmanuel Levinas zufolge – mir auferlegt und der Andere zitiere mich durch sein Antlitz (vgl. GS, 390, Anm. 1). Der Andere „vollzieht [...] den Akt seines Eintreffens als gesättigtes Phänomen“ (GS, 390). Dabei verzichtet das Ich auf seine transzendentale Funktion des Konstituierens und nimmt folglich die Rolle des Zeugen an. Die Ikone erlangt bei Marion schließlich die Vereinigung der drei vorausgehenden Typen gesättigter Phänomene:

Wie beim Geschichtsereignis verlangt sie nach einem Zusammentragen von Horizonten und Erzählungen [...]. Wie das Idol erhebt sie den Anspruch darauf [...], gesehen und erneut gesehen zu werden. [...] Wie der Leib [...] [affiziert] sie das *Ich* in solch tiefer Ursprünglichkeit [...], dass es seine Funktion als transzentalen Pol verliert. (GS, 391)

Die Ikone nähert sich sogar der Selbstaffektion an. Das Feld der Phänomenalität wird dadurch erweitert, dass die Phänomene als gegebene von den Grenzen der Gegenständlichkeit und Seiendheit befreit werden und die Phänomenalität „von einem eigenen Gebiet und Privileg gesättigter Phänomene ausgeht“ (GS, 391). Auf der Basis so verstandener gesättigter Phänomene in § 23 ergibt sich das Phänomen der Offenbarung in § 24 („Sich geben, sich offenbaren“ (GS, 392ff.)).

4. „Sich geben, sich offenbaren“ – Das Phänomen der Offenbarung als Maximum an Phänomenalität (GS 392–410)

In § 24 widmet sich Marion dem Verständnis der Offenbarung im engeren Sinn (GS, 392–410). Nicht alle Phänomene, mögen sie auch gesättigt sein, stellen „den gleichen Grad an Gegebenheit“ (GS, 392) dar. Deshalb ist zu fragen, ob Phänomene bekannt sind, die sich als *Maximum an Phänomenalität* geben. Schon das Aufbrechen einer solchen Frage trägt dazu bei, „eine grundlegende Bestandsaufnahme vorzunehmen“ (GS, 392). Ein solcher denkerischer Zugang könnte aber den Verdacht erhärten, dass „das Thema Gott“ (GS, 392) – illusionär – zum Vorschein kommen solle. Man stellt sich vielleicht schützend

vor die Rationalität und weigert sich gleichzeitig, die Frage nach dem Maximum an Phänomenalität zuzulassen. Ginge es darum „eine mögliche Gestalt der Phänomenologie“ (GS, 393) schlechthin zu entdecken, dann müssten zwei Forderungen erfüllt sein: 1. Es müsste in jedem Fall überhaupt um ein Phänomen gehen. 2. Das Maximum dieses Phänomens müsste in einem doppelten Sinn eine Möglichkeit bleiben, indem es a) „sich selbst ständig überschreitet“ (GS, 393) und b) nicht kausal auf innerweltliche Erfüllung zurückgeführt wird. Das aber bedeutet: „Das Maximum gesättigter Phänomenalität muss eine äußerste Möglichkeit des Phänomens bleiben – die letzte, aber gleichwohl im Sinne einer Möglichkeit“ (GS, 393).

Darin bündeln sich die vier Typen gesättigter Phänomene, „sodass es sich zugleich als Geschichtsereignis, Idol, Leib und Ikone (Antlitz) gibt“ (GS, 393). Hinzu kommt eine Art fünften Typs von Sättigung, wenn man einen zweiten Stufengrad der Sättigung, nämlich die „Sättigung der Sättigung“ (GS, 394) bedenkt. Es handelt sich somit um ein *paradoxaton* und in diesem Sinne um eine „Paradoxie zweiten Grades schlechthin“ (GS, 394).

Marion zufolge stellt sich somit die Frage, ob es eine Offenbarung in Gestalt paradoxer Paradoxie wirklich gibt. Sollte es sie geben, müsste sie sich als solche erweisen (vgl. GS, 394). Marion will die Möglichkeitsbedingungen nicht apriorisch durch Unmöglichkeiten einschränken, sondern zeigen, dass man das Offenbarungsphänomen sogar „als Möglichkeit der Unmöglichkeit“ (GS, 395) philosophisch folgendermaßen definieren kann: „Das Offenbarungsphänomen (§ 24) definiert sich also als Phänomen, das als Einziges die vier Bedeutungen gesättigter Phänomene (§ 23) in sich bündelt [...]. Wir sind *hier* – im Bereich der Phänomenologie, wo die *Möglichkeit* und *nicht die Wirklichkeit* als Norm gilt [...]“ (GS, 395; kurs. J. W.).

Die wirkliche Manifestation der Offenbarung gilt bei Marion folglich als „spezifische Angelegenheit der Offenbarungstheologie“ (GS, 395). Als Beispiel einer *möglichen Offenbarung* stellt Marion Jesus Christus vor. In ihm sieht der Phänomenologe ein Paradigma, mit dem sich die Philosophie befassen kann (wie es schon Spinoza, Kant oder Schelling getan haben). Die Manifestation Christi [gemeint ist wohl immer Jesus als der Christus/Messias] steht für ein Offenbarungsphänomen nach den vier Weisen der Sättigung, und zwar im Modus der Paradoxie. Der Entwurf einer möglichen Christologie, den Marion vorlegt, soll als konkretes Beispiel dienen, wie Phänomenologie und Theologie (hier

als Christologie) konkret gestaltet werden kann. Dies sei hier nur kurz zusammengefasst.

Der *Quantität* nach ist etwa das Phänomen Jesus von Nazaret ein völlig unvorhersehbares Ereignis, das wie ein Blitz aufleuchtet (vgl. Mt 24,27). Es handelt sich bei Jesus um ein „Ereignis schlechthin“ (GS, 397). In der Gestalt Jesu liegt aber auch die Eigenschaft einer Paradoxie der *Qualität* vor. Es geht um den Überschuss des Sichtbaren, wie etwa um das Weiß der Verklärungsgeschichte und somit um Vorgänge der Blendung und des Unerträglichen. „Unerträgliches hebt eine Wahrnehmung allgemein, d.h. jenseits der Unterscheidung von Hören und Sehen, auf, weil es aus der umfassenden Sättigung der Gestalt [Jesu] Christi herröhrt. Und diese Paradoxie kulminierte in der Auferstehung selbst“ (GS, 398).

Der *Relation* nach erscheint Jesus „als absolutes, jede Relation aufhebendes Phänomen, insofern er jeden Horizont sättigt“ (GS, 399).¹² In diesem Zusammenhang handelt es sich bei Marion auch um eine weitere Sättigung durch die Einbeziehung des Leibes (vgl. GS, 399). Dabei bietet sich in Jesu Tod am Kreuz „die höchste Gestalt von [Jesu] Christi Sichtbarkeit dar – ,Wahrhaftig, das war Gottes Sohn‘ (Mt 27,54)“ (GS, 399). Paradoxe Weise erkennt man darin den Leib, „der sich umso mehr manifestiert, je radikaler er sich in seinem Todeskampf durch sich selbst affiziert“ (GS, 399f.). Hier gilt die Paradoxie des Leibes als Selbstaffektion (vgl. weitere Schriftargumente 399–401).

Der *Modalität* nach erscheint Jesus als unanschauliches, beobachtbares Phänomen: Er schaut mich als Ikone an und macht mich zu seinen Zeugen. „Demnach gilt: Das gesättigte Phänomen röhrt effektiv aus dem Gegenblick des Anderen (Christus) her [...]“ (GS, 401).

Marion fasst folgendermaßen zusammen: „Gesättigte Phänomene kommen also in der Paradoxie vom Typ der Offenbarung auf ihren Höhepunkt, insofern sich in ihr zugleich ein Ereignis, ein Idol, ein Leib und eine Ikone bündeln, wofür die Gestalt Christi eine Möglichkeit darstellt“ (GS, 403).

¹² Hier ist allerdings darauf zu achten, dass Jesus nicht außerhalb des Judentums oder ohne dieses verstanden wird, als sei die vorausgehende Offenbarungsgeschichte der vorchristlichen Bibel für ihn nicht relevant. Jesu Einzigartigkeit ist vielmehr gerade darin zu sehen, dass er sich – nach neuerer Sicht der Forschung – gerade aus den jüdischen Offenbarungsquellen her verstanden hat.

5. Schlussbemerkungen

Über die Einordnung Jesu in das Kategorienschema lässt sich philosophisch und vor allem auch theologisch sehr wohl streiten. Darüber wird der Diskurs gewiss nicht beendet sein. Was die philosophische Einordnung betrifft, ist die Fachphilosophie selbst herausgefordert. Was die theologischen Textbeispiele betrifft, liegen bekanntlich ganze Bibliotheken von Bibelkommentaren, theologischen Lehrbüchern und verbindlichen Lehrtexten vor, auf die ich hier nicht eingehen kann. Dies verlangt deshalb die Probe aufs Exempel, die sich bei Marion (wie schon bei Levinas) auf die biblischen Texte bezieht, wobei bei Marion das Erste Testament eher schweigt, bei Levinas aber im Zentrum steht. Ich meine sogar, dass die Figur „Ein Gott Mensch?“ von Levinas bei Marion eine größere Aufmerksamkeit als Offenbarungsphänomen verdient hätte. Als Phänomenologe hält Marion mit Recht fest, dass sich die besprochenen Offenbarungsphänomene weder der Evidenz bei Descartes, noch dem Geöffnetsein des Begriffs bei Hegel, noch dem Ereignis bei Heidegger verdanken (vgl. GS, § 24, 403–407). Ein anderer Einwand, der die Beschreibung eines Offenbarungsphänomens der apophatischen (d.h. negativ-theologischen) Tradition betrifft, wonach Gott nur als Unbekannter bekannt sein kann, verdient mit Recht große Beachtung (vgl. GS, 405). Marion erinnert hier ja mit Recht an den ikonischen Gegenblick, der streng genommen nicht gesehen werden kann. Das Unsichtbare des Blickes des Anderen bleibt mir entzogen. Die gleiche Paradoxie zeigt sich auch am Geschichtsereignis, am Gemälde (Idol) und an der Leiblichkeit. „Es gibt hier eigentlich nichts zu sehen, wenn diese sich als solche geben. [...] Im Ausgang von Gegenständlichkeit kann und muss man also durchaus – und völlig widerspruchsfrei – sagen, dass gesättigte Phänomene nichts zu sehen geben“ (GS, 406).¹⁵

Es gehört zu Jean-Luc Marions Grundüberzeugungen, dass sich eine Theologie der Offenbarung – als nochmalige Steigerung des saturierten Phänomens – von einer theologisch gedeuteten *metaphysica specialis* grundlegend unterscheide. Zugleich besteht er darauf, dass die Phänomenologie selbst keine theologische Wende genommen hat.

¹⁵ Vgl. die späteren Werke: Jean-Luc Marion, *De surcroît. Études sur les phénomènes saturés* (Paris: PUF, 2001); vgl. Jean-Luc Marion, *Das Erscheinen des Unsichtbaren. Fragen zur Phänomenalität der Offenbarung* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2018).

Es gehe bei der Offenbarung im strengen Sinn um ein *id quo nihil manifestius donari potest*, wie es in *Étant donné* (339) in deutlicher Anspielung auf Anselm von Canterbury heißt. Offenbarung erweist sich als Paradoxie der Paradoxie und lässt sich nicht auf die Ja-Nein-Logik begrenzen. Sie gibt vielmehr der Mystik Raum. Wer sich der Mühe unterzieht, das Werk Marions mit großer Geduld zu studieren, wird für beide Disziplinen in hohem Maß belehrt sein.

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ILLUSION IN SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND THE QUEST FOR RESILIENCE: PHENOMENOLOGY IN CONVERSATION WITH IGNATIAN DISCERNMENT*

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ABSTRACT

The article brings into conversation phenomenology and the Ignatian tradition of discernment as it explores phenomena of illusion in spiritual life. Special attention is paid to harmful illusions, such as religiously motivated and/or justified sexual abuse, abuse of authority, and terrorist acts. Here the article explores both the resilience of illusions, as they enter at different phases of experience, and a process of learning resilience as a person or a community learns to cope with misperceptions, serious errors of judgment and their consequences.

Keywords

Phenomenology; Ignatian spirituality; Illusion; Religious violence; Sexual abuse; Authority abuse; Terrorist acts; Discernment; Resilience; Franz Brentano; Edmund Husserl; Martin Heidegger; Mark Juergensmeyer

DOI: 10.14712/23363398.2024.5

1. Introduction

This article focuses on the phenomenon of illusion in spiritual life, on its presentation, evaluation, and its harmful effects if the evaluation is incorrect. It uses difficult examples, in which incorrectly judged

* This work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund project 'Beyond Security: Role of Conflict in Resilience-Building' (reg. no.: CZ.02.01.01/00/22_008/0004595).

spiritual experiences or manipulated judgments have led to harmful actions like the abuse of authority, sexual abuse or terrorist acts. Methodologically, it draws on Franz Brentano's analysis of experience as a mental phenomenon, and in particular, his approach to different phases of experience, complemented by Edmund Husserl's notion of intentionality, and Martin Heidegger's understanding of care (*Sorge*). The approaches of phenomenology are complemented by insights from the Ignatian tradition, as it more explicitly addresses different movements taking place in spiritual life, and offers tools for learning how to understand and evaluate these processes adequately. It argues that the gift and the art of discernment¹ are vital for strengthening resilience, both of individual people and of communities affected by harmful illusions.

In recent years, the theme of resilience has assumed a vital importance in public discourse. In our part of the world, attention given to resilience is conditioned by the Covid 19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and now by the terrorist attacks in Israel and the violent response while searching for their perpetrators in Gaza. Such global events continue to remind people of their fragility. Resilience is often seen as an antidote. In this article, however, the quest for resilience is seen in broader terms.

1.1 What Is Resilience?

In dictionary definitions, resilience refers to the state or quality of 'recovering quickly from a shock' and being 'able to return to normal shape after stretching'.² Resilience then means both 'elasticity' and 'power of recovery' and 'has to do with resistance to adversity'.³ The notion has its roots in biology and physics. Ecology uses biological insights when it speaks of resilience as 'the ability of an ecosystem to

¹ The word discernment may need some further classification, as it is not commonly used in everyday discourse. The Greek for discernment is *diakrίnein*, which combines the prefix *dia* (between) and *krínein* (judge, decide). *Diakrίnein* then means to separate out, to make a distinction, to learn by discriminating, to determine, to decide, to give a judgment. The substantive *diákrīsis* is derived from such an operation. To discern usually refers to the ability to 'see or be aware of (something) clearly' (*Collins Paperback Dictionary & Thesaurus*, 215) or 'to recognize or perceive clearly ... to recognize or perceive (differences)' (*Collins English Dictionary*, 445) as well as the acts that demonstrate or cultivate such ability.

² See *Collins Paperback Dictionary & Thesaurus*, ed. Jeremy Butterfield (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2002), 647.

³ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 2, ed. Lesley Brown (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2547, s.v. 'resiliency'.

return to its original state after being disturbed', and technology draws on physics when it understands resilience as 'the amount of potential energy stored in an elastic material when deformed'.⁴

In humanities and social sciences, resilience is seen as 'an ability to absorb disturbing impulses and to adapt oneself' when facing 'crises at the level of individual lives, society and socio-ecological systems'.⁵ It is not presupposed that people can return to an 'original state'. Rather, resilience is seen as an integrative process making it possible to work through crises, opening ways forward in which people can and need to participate and communicate.⁶ In such a process, there is a long-term and ongoing interaction between the different personal and communal webs of understanding, survival strategies, communication skills and other competences contributing to coping well when the stability of life is significantly disturbed.⁷ Resilience is not understood here only as a capacity to overcome crisis, to adapt, but rather as a holistically understood care for personal and social sources of life that can help in times of danger when certainties are disintegrating, because they can offer complex support.⁸

The insights from the social, political and psychological contexts in which the concept of resilience is used are relevant also in the field of

⁴ *Collins English Dictionary*, general consultant J. M. Sinclair (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2000), 1310.

⁵ Alice Koubová, podcast at Svobodná akademie, April 27, 2023, <https://havelchannel.cz/cs/01816> (accessed February 20, 2024).

⁶ See Ondřej Horký-Hlucháň and Clara Burry, 'Building Resilience through Participation: Lessons from the Civil Society in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans,' *Policy Publications*, September 18, 2023, <https://www.iir.cz/en/building-resilience-through-participation-lessons-from-the-civil-society-in-eastern-europe-and-western-balkans-1> (accessed October 24, 2023).

⁷ In the first phase of the research programme Resilient Society for the 21st Century (Research Programme of the Czech Academy of Sciences AV21, 2021–2025), coordinated by Alice Koubová, resilience is identified as a complex of social connections, strategies, policies and ways of communication that in a time of crisis society can use in a way that would not be in the long-term disadvantageous for the society (e.g. negatively reactive, short sighted, extremist), but transformative, responsible and sustainable. Social resilience is irreducibly connected with individual resilience. See *Odolná společnost*, <http://odolnaspolecnost.cz/o-programu/> (accessed February 20, 2024).

⁸ Alice Koubová explains that 'the care for the sources of well-being means something other than to be just focussed on supressing threats and shortcomings ... it does not deny them, but frames them, so that they cease to be boarderless, and their power even may diminish by the pure fact that they are losing hegemony.' See Alice Koubová, 'Společenská odolnost – rámování perspektivy a metodologická východiska,' in *Odolná společnost: Mezi tyraníí a bezmocií*, ed. Alice Koubová and Barbora Braunová (Praha: Filozofický ústav AV, 2023), 7–24, here 16.

spiritual life studied in this article. While analysing the phenomena of illusion, in particular those illusions heavily damaging human well-being, such as authority and sexual abuse, and justifications of terrorist acts, I will focus mainly on one aspect of resilience, namely that of the transformative power of understanding.

1.2 Allusions and Illusions in Spiritual Life

In the mainstream religious traditions, spiritual experience is seen as a deeper personal engagement, personal and shared/collective, with the realities that the ritual, dogmatic or ethical dimensions of these traditions proclaim and celebrate. In the broader sense, however, it is possible to understand spiritual experience as any human experience that is linked to some encounter with the transcendent and/or the holy, or that includes insights or motivations for actions with the frames of reference including the transcendent and/or the holy.⁹ In this field, crises caused by having trusted in something that later proved to be illusory are painful and can have damaging effects on individuals engaging with the illusions, their direct surroundings as well as broader communities.

For studying the possibilities of transformative understanding an important difference needs to be made, namely between allusions and illusions that impact on spiritual life and often come close to each other.

Allusion means three things: ‘a play on words, a pun’; ‘a metaphor, a parable, an allegory’; and ‘a covert, passing, or indirect reference’.¹⁰ In religious discourse, allusions are related to the prophetic literature; to warnings or even judgments that, while expressing a finality, are still open to reversal; or to promises that can be only occasionally confirmed by the events taking place in the given moments of history.¹¹ One of the classic examples is a mirage, seeing an oasis in the desert. There is the ‘apparent perception of an external object or sense-datum when no such object or stimulus is present’,¹² and yet, it is an authentic

⁹ See Ivana Noble, *Tracking God: An Ecumenical Fundamental Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 193–194, 211–234.

¹⁰ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1, 59.

¹¹ See Benjamin Sommer, ‘Allusions and Illusions: The Unity of the Book of Isaiah in Light of Deutero-Isaiah’s Use of Prophetic Tradition,’ in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy Melugin and Marvin Sweeney, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 156–186, here 174.

¹² *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1, 1186n. 20.

phenomenon, an authentic experience of an illusion.¹⁵ But the illusion is not raised to reality by its authenticity. The oasis is not what is real, but the experience of the people who believed they saw it is real, even if they later found out that they only imagined they saw it. In the case of the mirage, the allusion may provide a type of insight into one's own fallibility that does not damage human integrity, and in retrospect may be even liberating, because the allusion can contribute to the understanding of the 'elasticity' of human experience.

Illusion signifies both a deliberate mockery and an error of judgment that leads to 'misapprehension of the true state of affairs' or even to instances of 'sense-perception' of an external reality 'suggesting a false belief as to its nature'.¹⁴ However, illusion does not always have only a negative meaning. In works of art, illusion is at times deliberately engaged in order to discern and reveal a deeper truth.¹⁵ Illusions can be turned into allusions,¹⁶ and this is also valid in the field of spiritual experience.¹⁷ This process, as we will see later, vitally contributes to long-term resilience building. And yet, it would be wrong to deny that

¹⁵ See Lucien O'Dwyer, 'Reality in Husserl and in Heidegger,' in *A Hundred Years of Phenomenology: Perspectives on a Philosophical Tradition*, ed. Robin Small (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 45–51, here 50.

¹⁴ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* I, 1518.

¹⁵ Lawrence Kimmel points out that in art the polarity between reality and illusion can be at times overcome, as the 'the discernment of reality and the disclosure of truth' can happen 'through the art of illusion'. Lawrence Kimmel, 'Reality and Illusion in the Work of Art,' in *Human Creation between Reality and Illusion*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Analecta Husserliana LXXXVII* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), xi–xxv, here xxv. The art of illusion, however, does not cover spiritual, religious, moral or political illusions. Kimmel speaks about a gentler layer of human experience, where fine art, music, literature, theatre or film constitute a fictive reality that 'lies somewhere between the real of common sense and the imaginary of poetry' (*ibid.*).

¹⁶ Max Stakiewicz says that 'in a sense only in the theater can one see the truth as deception and the truth of deception, that is, the mechanisms ... capable of conjuring up the gods or the idols.' See Max Stakiewicz, 'On the Truth and Lie of Illusion in the Theatrical Sense,' in *Human Creation between Reality and Illusion*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 45–52, here 45 and 50.

¹⁷ Brian Grassom speaks about the paradoxical nature of the announcement in art: 'It is the announcement of the ever-unfulfilled promise: the advent of the Other. The invisible is about to become visible. The unnameable will be named. The unknowable will become knowable. The impossible is about to happen, quietly and peacefully. A Stranger will appear at the door of the heart. Silence will become sound for a brief moment in eternity, before becoming Silence once more. Time stands still, and waits for eternity to pass, before becoming time again.' Brian Grassom, 'Reality, Illusion, and Alterity: The Advent of the Other,' in *Human Creation between Reality and Illusion*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 127–137, here 135–136.

some experiences are extremely hard to integrate into such a process, and some illusions have a strong power to mislead and harm.

1.3 Harmful Illusions

One such hard example is the case of Jean Vanier, the founder and the leader of the L'Arche community. After his death, it became known that over nearly 70 years of his active ministry he abused more than 25 women, both sexually and spiritually.¹⁸ In Vanier's case, the spiritual experience of his teacher, Thomas Philippe, a Dominican priest, was used as justification for practising and requiring nudity and sexual touching in spiritual direction or shared contemplation, arguing that it was important for the spiritual growth of his victims.¹⁹ Johanna Stieber argues that cases of sexual abuse do not occur in isolation from the ideologies, religious cultures, communities and institutions that sustain them. Often these do not appear as extremist or fundamentalist on the surface, and yet a multifaceted analysis of the different forms penetrating both the physical social space and the realm of media can reveal how a damaged spirituality, sexuality and position of power participate in the dangerous illusions and their spread.²⁰

¹⁸ See the Study Commission set up by L'Arche International, that was released on 30 January 2023; for the full text in English, see Bernard Granger, Nicole Jeammet, Florian Michel, Antoine Mourges, Gwenola Rimbaut, and Claire Vincent-Mory, *Control and Abuse Investigation on Thomas Philippe, Jean Vanier and L'Arche (1950–2019)*, https://commissiondetude-jeanvanier.org/commissiondetudeindependante2023-empriseetabus/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Report_Control-and-Abuse_EN.pdf (accessed November 5, 2023).

¹⁹ Kate Shellnutt summarises: ‘The commission describes a French ministry called *L'Eau vive* (Living Water), which had been led in the 1950s by Vanier’s spiritual mentor, a Dominican priest named Thomas Philippe. After a mystical experience involving the Virgin Mary, Philippe developed “theological arguments to justify his sexual practices with nuns or young lay women aspiring to a religious vocation,” the report said. “Philippe’s behaviour led him to be barred from public or private ministry by the Catholic Church, but he remained clandestinely in touch with Vanier and other members of *L'Eau vive*, who went on to found *L'Arche* in 1964. Jacqueline d’Halluin, an aspiring nun who also became a disciple of Philippe’s and whose letters describe a sexually intimate relationship with Vanier, came up with the organization’s name. Philippe became the director of *L'Arche*’s spiritual centre *La Ferme* through 1991.’ See Kate Shellnutt, ‘Report: Jean Vanier’s *L'Arche* Hid “Mystical-Sexual” Sect for Decades,’ *Christianity Today*, January 30, 2023, at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2023/january/jean-vanier-l-arche-abuse-sect-report-thomas-philippe-catho.html> (accessed November 4, 2023).

²⁰ See Johanna Stieber, ‘Religion and Sexual Violence,’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Gender and Society*, ed. Caroline Starkey and Emma Tomalin (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 339–350. For the critique of church complicity in perpetuation of abuse acts, see also Hilary Jerome Scarsella and Stephanie Krehbiel, ‘Sexual

The second area includes situations in which religion was used as justification of acts of public violence, where the experiences, including call to actions, draw on ‘a divine mandate for destruction’.²¹ Human judgment regarding what comes and what does not come from God, Mark Juergensmeyer argues, is also here underpinned by the ideology, the motivation and the organizational structure that operate on the threshold of the political, social and ideological circumstances. A vision of God becomes ‘fused with violent expressions of social aspirations, personal pride, and movements for political change’.²²

1.4 Phenomenological Analysis and Ignatian Discernment in a Conversation

Stilbert draws on cultural anthropology as well as post-colonial and feminist biblical hermeneutics, as she studies self-conscious emotions and the institutional dynamics that is implicit in the continuation of violent illusions.²³ Juergensmeyer’s analysis takes a ‘sociotheological approach’²⁴ to the problem of illusion in spiritual life. In this article, I will offer a different methodological approach, as I bring into conversation phenomenological analysis and Ignatian discernment.

Brentano draws attention to the different stages of experience and thus helps in identifying where illusion comes in. Husserl, Brentano’s pupil, further develops an understanding of intentionality and its

Violence: Christian Theological Legacies and Responsibilities,’ *Religion Compass* 13, no. 9 (2019): 1–13; Ruth Everhart, *The #MeToo Reckoning: Facing the Church’s Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Misconduct* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020).

²¹ See Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

²² See Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 10. Juergensmeyer quotes the old saying: ‘One person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom-fighter’, and he analyses the cases when what is seen as ‘a subjective judgment about legitimacy of certain violent acts’ is nourished by ‘the transcendent moralism with which such acts are justified ... the religious images of struggle and transformation – concepts of cosmic war’. See Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 9–10.

²³ See Johanna Stieber, ‘Within and Without Purity, Danger, Honour, and Shame: Anthropological Approaches in Feminist Hebrew Bible Studies,’ in *Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect III: Methods*, ed. Susanne Scholz (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2015), 111–135.

²⁴ See Mark Juergensmeyer and Mona Kanwal Sheikh, ‘A Sociotheological Approach to Understanding Religious Violence,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, ed. Michael Jerryson, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Margo Kitts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 620–644.

impact on all phases of experience. He and Heidegger²⁵ also provide new insights for assessing the roles and limits of one's active engagement in identifying the illusion as illusion. Heidegger also links intentionality with his understanding of the care for being or its absence, and thus he makes a significant contribution to the understanding of what Brentano sees as the final stage of experience, in which the presentation and judgment are transferred into the emotional and the practical life.

I argue that it makes a difference in dealing with the crisis engagement that a spiritual illusion causes, and thus it is also relevant for resilience building. At different stages of illusion, it has a different potential to cause harm but also a different allusive potential.

Ignatian discernment lies within the divine-human relation; at a horizontal level, it is also relational, as it has both personal and communal dimensions.²⁶ It gives resilience the dynamics of integration, as it concerns not only individual acts but the whole process of forming human spiritual life. Thus, discernment in the Ignatian tradition goes beyond working with binary oppositions such as illusion/truth, good/evil, justice/injustice, as it includes also possibilities of nuance, recognition of different human perspectives and of the otherness of God to any human perspective. And yet it does not opt for relativism. This rich tradition is thus a helpful complement to the phenomenological analysis. Both together are suitable to address the problem of human fallibility in the different layers of experience. Both together can help in spelling out how learning through fallibility may be beneficial, and how the 'elasticity' of faith can be strengthened through the deepening of an understanding of what has been going on in times of crisis.

²⁵ Heidegger was familiar with Brentano's work, and already in 1914 wrote a book review on his thought. See Martin Heidegger, "Von der Klassifikation psychischer Phänomene", von Franz Brentano, *Literarische Rundschau für das Katholische Deutschland* 40 (1914): 330–332.

²⁶ Discernment as a gift is at the same time 'the art of choice, which safeguards both the transcendence of the Good and the ultimate freedom of the human person.' Brother Adalberto Mainardi and Ivana Noble, 'Discernment and the Christian Life: Introduction,' *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Theologica* 9, no. 2 (2019): 5–10, here 6. See also Antonio Barruffo, 'Discernement,' in *Dictionnaire de la vie spirituelle*, ed. Stefano de Fiores and Tullo Goffi (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 271–278. In the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius and in his *Autobiography*, discernment is understood as a key to living in harmony with the divine call to praise God and to serve God, and to find salvation in it. See Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* 25. I am using the translation by Joseph Munitiz and Philip Endean, eds., *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), 279–360.

2. Illusions at Different Levels of Experience

Brentano claimed that we have access in our inner consciousness to what we call experience in three ways, or we could also say in three layers, dimensions or phases, although their succession is not always that easy to isolate. These are: (i) the presentation; (ii) the judgment; and (iii) the movement of our will and feelings.²⁷

2.1 Presentation

The first layer of experience refers to our mental encounter with that which emerges. It is a bedrock of experience, its most stable reference point. As such, however, it is pre-linguistic. It does not yet involve an interpretation, and the question of truth and untruth does not yet enter in. In the case of spiritual experience, this would be the moment of revelation or illumination, the encounter with reality perceived as external to the conscious subject. When an illusion enters here, we can speak about a deception. It can be deliberate when the presentation is fabricated – by someone else or by the person involved. Either the presentation of what is claimed to be presented has not taken place, and people behave as if it did, or something else has taken place and it has been deliberately twisted. It can be different from wishful thinking or any other form of projection in which no external impulses are involved. For this reason, some phenomenologists exclude the possibility of illusion at this stage and even insist that perception excludes illusion, because any singular perception, if it is perception, needs to be structurally cohesive with the entire system of perception.²⁸ My article takes a different line as it argues that deception and illusion impact on the whole scale of human experience, even where we are not dealing with deliberate deception or hallucination. For that argument, however, I need to include human intentionality already into this first stage.

As an example, we can return to the case of Jean Vanier's mentor, Thomas Philippe, referred to above. In the report of the Study Commission set up by L'Arche International, Philippe is quoted as follows:

²⁷ See Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 198.

²⁸ For them this cohesiveness distinguishes a perception from an illusion or a hallucination. For a detailed argument, see Claude Romano, *At the Heart of Reason* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

On several occasions, while in Rome in 1958 ... I received very obscure graces, which I still do not manage to identify and classify: those graces were neither lights nor consolations; although they had the same characters and the same effects as the inner graces of tranquillity and union, they involved a divine embrace of the body, definitely located in the region of sexual organs and radiating from there as if from one's inside throughout the whole body and onto the spirit.²⁹

According to the witness, something presented itself, to the senses, through the understanding of Philippe. Retrospectively, we know that such experiences were at the beginning of justifying and perpetrating acts of sexual and authority abuse.⁵⁰ But where did the illusion enter in? Was it at the presentation or the judgment?

When we move to the spiritual and pastoral context, the Ignatian tradition of discernment offers some helpful tools. It works with the possibility of error at the level of presentation, although it recognises that it is accessible only retrospectively, through a 'reflective awareness' of what has taken place. Such reflection includes the other levels of experience, especially 'inner moods and feelings'. Then, equipped with the effects of the presentation, later noted and analysed, it returns to its origins. St Ignatius differentiates between a perception of the divine agents, and of the deception of the enemy, whom he understands as 'a malign intelligence who operates through deceit'.⁵¹ He most closely addresses this theme in his *Spiritual Exercises*, offering twenty-two rules for the discernment of the spirits, organised in two sets.

The first set is recommended for beginners, to help them understand, at least to some extent, 'the various movements produced in the

²⁹ Jeammet et al., *Control and Abuse Investigation on Thomas Philippe, Jean Vanier and L'Arche* (1950–2019), 76.

⁵⁰ The report continues: 'During his trial, T. Philippe presented and defended his "system" himself. ... Those documents [recordings from his interrogation in 1956], in which he takes full responsibility and firmly defends his beliefs and practices without admitting their sinful nature, enable one to access his presentation of the facts and retrace their chronology.' Jeammet et al., *Control and Abuse Investigation on Thomas Philippe, Jean Vanier and L'Arche* (1950–2019), 76, n. 2.

⁵¹ See Jim Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2017), 71. Manney points out that Ignatius uses many different words for 'the malevolent spiritual entity that seeks to turn us away from God – the "bad spirit", "bad angel", and "Lucifer" appear frequently in his writings, but his favourite is "enemy". He calls it "the enemy", "our enemy", "the enemy of our progress and eternal salvation", and often "the enemy of our human nature"'. See *ibid.* 1.

soul, the good that they may be accepted and the bad that they may be rejected'.⁵² First of all, St Ignatius points out, it is important to be aware whether we are on the way towards God or away from God because this has an impact on how the different agencies come to us through our perception. Those who are adjusted to sinful life perceive the agency of God as disturbing, while for those who 'are making serious progress in the purification of their sins and advancing from good to better in the service of God Our Lord' it works the opposite way: 'then it is typical of the bad spirit to harass, sadden and obstruct, and to disturb the soul with false reasoning, so as to impede progress.' On the other hand, 'the distinctive trait of the good spirit is to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, ... removing all obstacles, so that the person may move forward in doing good.'⁵³

This set of rules would not help much when dealing with what might be called a false consolation, such as in Philippe's testimony. The second set of rules, for the more advanced, would be more helpful here, as it offers more detailed insights regarding how 'the evil spirit' misleads by manipulating what people who think that they are on the way towards God experience as a consolation. When St Ignatius says that '[o]nly God Our Lord gives consolation to the soul without preceding cause',⁵⁴ he is aware of a much more complex web of communication in which human beings and the spiritual world participate, as well as of the role human abilities and limits can play in simulating spiritual experience. Thus he says: 'We must pay close attention to the whole course of our thoughts: if the beginning, middle and end are entirely good and tend towards what is wholly right, this is a sign of the good angel.'⁵⁵

It is interesting that he speaks about the 'course of thought' when he refers to spiritual experience. We can interpret it as a need to distance himself from the non-critical acceptance of claims that what we perceive is identical to what God communicates. Similarly, he speaks about the contrary, about the situations when 'the course of the thoughts

⁵² St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 313.

⁵³ St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 315. This simple distinction reflects Ignatius's early spiritual experiences as dictated in his *Autobiography* 6–8. I am using the translation by Philip Endean, in Munitiz and Endean *Saint Ignatius*, 13–64. Endean prefers to call the work *Reminiscences*. Here I use the more standard term *Autobiography*, the paragraph numbers are the same in all the critical editions.

⁵⁴ St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 330.

⁵⁵ St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 335

suggested to us leads us finally to something bad, or less good than what one had previously intended to do ... all this is a clear sign of the bad spirit, the enemy of our progress and eternal well-being.³⁶

No set of rules can grasp every human situation, and St Ignatius was aware of that. His insights, nevertheless, help in tracing why and how ‘bad ideas and disastrous mistakes present themselves in attractive garb’,³⁷ and, we can add, why the level of presentation is prone to illusions. Here St Ignatius offers a quite polarised interpretation of the differences. When illusion enters at the level of judgment and response, however, as we will see, he needs to work with more nuance.

2.2 Judgment

For Brentano, the second layer of experience consists of formulating a judgment.³⁸ It builds on our linguistic-intellectual grasp of what was presented and allows for new insights or clarifications as well as for new errors. According to Brentano, human intentionality plays an important role here, but Brentano does not explain this role in relation to the whole web of lived experience, where the capacity for resilience needs to be situated and where the objective and the subjective dimensions of human lives interact.³⁹ For this, we need to go to Husserl, who states that both presentation and judgment involve human intentionality.⁴⁰ Husserl explains that intending something means wanting to

³⁶ Ibid. For more complex examples, see also *Autobiography* 19 and 31.

³⁷ Jim Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2017), 72.

³⁸ See Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, 198. Brentano presented the distinct classes of psychical phenomena, presentations and judgments, already in his Würzburg lectures in 1869–1871. He first saw judgments as instances of acceptance and rejection. His notes show that he intended to write a fourth book of his Psychology dedicated to judgment, where he would elaborate on the distinction between evident and blind judgments. See Robin D. Rollinger, ‘Brentano’s Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint: Its Background and Conception,’ in *Franz Brentano’s Metaphysics and Psychology*, ed. Ion Tănasescu (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2012), 262–309, here 269, 273.

³⁹ Moran and Cohen point out that Brentano does not recognise that in all intentional experiences that give content to the complex lived experience, the objective and the subjective interact. ‘When I see an object, I only ever see it from one side, in a certain kind of light, from a certain angle and so on. ... The same object is presenting itself to me in different modes,’ and thus it is necessary to distinguish ‘between the object which is intended and the particular mode under which it is intended’. See Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2012), 169; Husserl, *Logical Investigations* V §17.

⁴⁰ Husserl goes back to Brentano’s presentation and states: ‘In perception something is perceived, in imagination, something is imagined, in a statement something stated, in love something loved, in hate hated, in desire desired, etc.’ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), V §10.

think or to say something, bringing it by will to mind and sometimes also to the tongue. For him, perception involves intending that can be fulfilled or unfulfilled, judgment is intending that is already joined to a particular content.⁴¹ Still, the content comes to our consciousness in different ways, and it is not free of ambiguity. For Husserl not only what is being intended at the level of judgment matters, but also the quality of the act of intending: in other words, what kind of act it is, and what it does to the judgment.⁴² Thus we can see judgment from more than one side, and allow for the subsequent changes in judgment that can include both expansions of understanding or radicalisations of intended outcomes.

The Ignatian tradition of discernment focuses on resilience as a kind of gaining elasticity of faith that helps to broaden the scope of its understanding. At the level of judgment, which is seen as a backbone to resilience, it involves cultivating ‘the ability to separate what’s important from what’s irrelevant or misleading’. It is a skill that consists in ‘learning how to interpret spiritual senses and inner movements of the heart’ and a methodology ‘applying these skills (and other tools) to the choices we face in real life’.⁴³ The possibility of illusion is not excluded, and St Ignatius’ rules for how to make a good choice focus more on the process than on the end result, which would, for him, still be conditioned by our fallibility.⁴⁴ This, however, also means that illusion is not demonised and that coping with the illusion at the level of judgment is integrated into the stages of further growth.

When St Ignatius speaks about making a choice of life in the Second Week of the Exercises, he insists that the human and the divine perspectives are not mixed in the human judgment. Thus he speaks about ‘every good election, in so far as it depends on us ...’, and with that in mind he recommends that ‘it will be to the exercitant’s advantage to make it properly’, rather than assume that a kind of infallibly good

⁴¹ See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967, §4, 15, 20.

⁴² See Husserl, *Logical Investigations* V §21 and 37.

⁴³ Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 62.

⁴⁴ See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 2, 5, 14–18. He is aware of different levels of certainty one has and can have regarding the judgment on what really comes from God, as he explains that the direct communication does not mean direct and infallible understanding on the human side, and that the human judgment and understanding is to a different degree clouded by different desires and attachments. Therefore, he warns, people who undergo the Spiritual Exercises need to be careful not to make hasty decisions based on their premature judgments.

choice is guaranteed.⁴⁵ He distinguishes three times for, or three proper ways of, making a good choice: (i) ‘When God our Lord so moves and attracts the will that without doubting or being able to doubt, such a dedicated soul follows what is shown’; (ii) ‘when sufficient light and understanding is received through experience of consolations and desolations and through experience of the discernment of different spirits’; (iii) when ‘the soul is not disturbed by different spirits, and can use her natural powers freely and calmly’.⁴⁶ St Ignatius further offers two ways of making a good and correct choice in the third time, when the judgement of a devout person uses the powers of reason and imagination in order to place one’s best possible choice in the given time and circumstance into God’s hands.⁴⁷ Thus, the choice is not free of ambiguity, but it is integrated into the living relationship with God.

Integration of what is first judged as an experience of an illusion into the whole of human spiritual life, and thus turning an illusion into an allusion, stands and falls with this need to allow for nuances. This process of integration both requires and strengthens the ability to change, to accept where one has been wrong, and not to stay in that wrong, as well as the personally grasped knowledge that even if we as human beings are fallible, it is still possible to grow even through illusions.

But then, there is something like a wrong judgement that lasts and leads to wrong actions. Thomas Philippe, and others like him,⁴⁸ perpetuated acts of violence over a long period of time, and the recognition that such behaviour was wrong did not come from them themselves. In these cases, superiors and church authorities acting upon allegations of the harmed witnesses and the public pressure that came with it, have worked towards integrating such difficult experiences of the victims

⁴⁵ See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 169, 174.

⁴⁶ St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 175–177. The first and the second times are rare, because, as Jim Manney points out, ‘we live in a condition of a perpetual spiritual conflict.’ See Jim Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality*, 71.

⁴⁷ See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 178–188. Manney says: ‘It seems that the certitude promised by discernment is limited. We get a small peek at the mind of God; it doesn’t come with a guarantee that things will turn out the way we think they should. Discernment does not give us certainty about the future. But we can have confidence that the decision we make *now* in these circumstances is the right one.’ Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 254. Following St Ignatius, we could say even less, namely that we can have a confidence that the decision is done rightly.

⁴⁸ See, for example, the cases of Brother Emmanuel of Taizé or the famous Jesuit artist Marko Rupnik.

into the healthy judgment and actions regarding the common life of the communities involved and people with whom they engage.⁴⁹

2.3 Response

This takes me to the third layer of experience identified by Brentano. He could not find one single word to describe it and, in the end, settled for the movement of two human powers together, will and feelings, pushing people in different directions, liberating them or paralysing them with fear, making them generous or selfish. The word ‘movement’ signifies the openness of this process in which the basic attitudes in our mental structure, like–dislike, love–hate, form our relations to God, to others, to ourselves and to the world in which we live.⁵⁰ If the illusions enter in here, they affect translations of human judgment into motivations for actions. In the following analysis, I will call this third way a response⁵¹ and complement Brentano’s insight with the Heideggerian notion of *Sorge*, usually translated as concern or care.⁵²

According to Heidegger, *Sorge* is both influenced and influences *Dasein*, being in the world, or There-being, as William J. Richardson

⁴⁹ Apart from the report of the Study Commission set up by L’Arche International, see also a statement by the prior of Taizé, Brother Alois, *Ascertaining the Truth*, June 4, 2019, https://www.taize.fr/en_article26170.html (accessed November 5, 2023), and the document *Safeguarding at Taizé: Report 2019–2022*, December 12, 2022, https://www.taize.fr/IMG/pdf/22.12.12_rapport_etape_en-2.pdf (accessed November 5, 2023). The third example is still pending: see the attempts to restore correct judgment and actions, such as *Statement from Fr. Johan Verschueren SJ, Delegate of Fr. General Sosa SJ and Major Superior for the International Houses: ‘Rupnik Case: Jesuits Invite Anyone Who Has Suffered Abuse to Contact Them’*, December 18, 2022, <https://www.jesuits.global/2022/12/18/rupnik-case-jesuits-invite-anyone-who-has-suffered-abuse-to-contact-them/> (accessed November 5, 2023).

⁵⁰ There is an interesting biographical context to this theory. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* came out first in 1874, four years after the promulgation of the dogma on Papal Infallibility, and it is likely that this event to which he had serious reservations, provided a background against which he worked with the open dynamics of human understanding and attitude formation.

⁵¹ Alternatively, I can speak about an attitude, as does Robert Romanyshyn, who argues that the existential-phenomenal reflection revealed that ‘an attitude was an *intentional and situational phenomenon which related an individual to some aspects of his own history, to other people and to a project unfolding in time*.’ Robert Romanyshyn, ‘Towards a Phenomenology of Attitudes,’ in *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology I*, ed. Amadeo Giorgi, William F. Fischer, and Rolf von Eckartsberg (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1971), 174–197, here 174.

⁵² For a more detailed analysis, see William Blatner, ‘Care (*Sorge*)’, in *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 137–144.

translates it.⁵⁵ Heidegger says that in the There-being (*Dasein*) ‘the There’ is ‘the luminosity of Being’.⁵⁴ To care for Being is to ‘assume himself as the There and thus achieve authenticity – to fail to do so is to be victim of inauthenticity’.⁵⁵ In the case of spiritual experience, it means that within human care/concern there is an openness towards what is not intended by humans.

Heidegger himself may be a good example of someone whose response (concern/care/*Sorge*) was clouded by the illusion with which he perceived the Nazi regime in Germany, whose atrocities he never fully acknowledged. His judgment influenced his response: he held the office of rector and was willing to expel Jewish students and colleagues as well as to engage in Nazi propaganda.⁵⁶ Heidegger’s own theoretical reflection on failing to respond to the presentation and judgment as being ‘a victim of inauthenticity’ might have participated in his lack of taking responsibility in this particular and heavily problematic instance. It is too passive. It does not take sufficiently into account the share of responsibility for the consequences of one’s choices, for embodying or disembodying the luminosity of ‘the There’.⁵⁷

Thus, we may need to go back to Husserl’s correlation of the subject and the object also in the third layer of experience, response. There, the subject is not only a victim of their likes and dislikes, of what they care for and of what they ignore, of what they are interested in and of what they leave behind as boring or irrelevant, of what they aim at and what they miss. The concrete existence in which human authenticity is at stake reaches beyond the passive/active divide. And the notion of care/concern (*Sorge*) is a key to the actual movement of the feelings and of will that co-create the horizons in which people move, and co-shape

⁵⁵ See William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963), 539–540.

⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Brief über den ‘Humanismus’* (Berlin: Francke, 1947), 71.

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Brief über den ‘Humanismus’*, 77.

⁵⁶ For this reason after the war he was tried and briefly expelled from the university. However, he never admitted that he was in the wrong. See Thomas Sheehan, ‘Heidegger and the Nazis,’ *The New York Review of Books* 35, no. 10 (June 16, 1988): 38–47, here 47.

⁵⁷ Heidegger, *Brief über den ‘Humanismus’*, 77.

the world in which they live.⁵⁸ In this context, Heidegger's claim that '[m]an is the shepherd of Being'⁵⁹ falls into place.

The limit of one's active role, however, remains. It is related both to the ability to perceive truth, or in a more Heideggerian language, 'the luminosity of Being',⁶⁰ which even in an authentic mode of living still transcends the human self,⁶¹ and to the 'disposition that includes affectivity and is oriented to decision making'.⁶²

Illusion entering through the door of human response to what was presented and judged is addressed by Mark Juergensmeyer. He uses many different examples, such as 'the shy young man', who grins into a video camera a day before he was to become a Hamas suicide bomber, in his view, a martyr. This man proclaims that he is 'doing this for Allah'. For Juergensmeyer, this is a classical instance of 'spiritualizing violence', a process in which 'religion has given terrorism a remarkable power'.⁶³ People like this young man, as Juergensmeyer demonstrates, are found in all religious groups where apocalyptic beliefs are mingled with notions of election and with political aspirations.

Juergensmeyer also analyses the assassination of Muslim men and boys praying at the tombs of Patriarchs, and Rabbi Meir Kahane's justifications of further killing of Muslims by the members of his Jewish Defense League, which drew on the idea that 'the Messiah will come in a great conflict, in which Jews triumph and praise God through their

⁵⁸ See Whelan's interpretation of Lonergan's grasp of Heidegger's *Sorge*: 'Normally consciousness is a directed concern, what we care about, care for, are interested in, aim at. Heidegger's term is *Sorge*, care, "concern" ... Thus we have four moments of concrete existence: subject, concern, horizon, world. The subject's concern determines his horizon and his horizon selects his world.' Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1993), 83–85; Gerard Whelan, *Redeeming History: Social Concern in Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2013), 10–11, n. 5.

⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Brief über den 'Humanismus'* (Berlin: Francke, 1947), 75.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, *Brief über den 'Humanismus'*, 71.

⁶¹ Richardson links care in Heidegger to what people at the level of judgment comprehended as truth. He explains: 'It is the process of truth that constitutes man's care (*Sorge*) as man. Insofar as his concern is the bringing-to-pass of truth according to his measure, he guards (*hütet*) truth, serves as watchman (*Wächterschaft*) to it.' Richardson, *Heidegger*, 539. And this makes it possible for him to link the limit of what one can comprehend to the truth. He says: 'It is only this that lies within man's power to accept or reject. Whether the process of truth comes to pass in the first place is not for him to decide. The only question is whether or not he himself will discover the genuine sense of his own commitment corresponding to the mitteness of Being imparted to him.' Ibid, 540.

⁶² Whelan, *Redeeming History*, 10.

⁶³ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 216–217.

success.' Kahane, according to Juergensmeyer's account, adds that 'he felt that it was going to happen fairly soon and that he and his partisans could help bring about this messianic act.' And he claims: 'Miracles don't just happen, ... they are made ... [to] change the course of history.' Juergensmeyer shows in detail how one form of spiritualisation of violence produces another, while it is largely impossible to trace its prime cause. Rather he speaks about similarities and correlations when people become 'shepherds of Being' in a twisted way, performing their dramatic acts of symbolic meaning in which 'violence has been accompanied by strong claims of moral justification and an enduring absolutism, characterised by the intensity of the religious activist's commitment and the transhistorical scope of their goals.'⁶⁴ Their care/concern (*Sorge*), their movements of feelings and will are expressed within struggles that are cosmic, religious, national, social and move within them in a closed circle that provides all, motivation, means, justification. Only when the closed circle is broken and thus opened can illusions be identified as illusions, and different, though hard processes leading towards healing and genuine spiritual growth can start.⁶⁵

Juergensmeyer points out that a process of breaking circles of violence needs to include ways of working with religious imagination that has gone wild as well as with social and political tensions and personal humiliations experienced by people 'who long to restore an integrity they perceive as lost'. And he concludes that for this to happen 'some assertion of moderation in religion's passion, and some acknowledgement of religion in elevating the spiritual and moral values in public life' are needed.⁶⁶ Here one needs to ask what kind of moderation in religion's passion would be helpful, such that it would not cause in effect a reduction of spiritual life to its mediocre forms. Hence, the role of discernment and in particular, a good analysis of desire comes into play.

⁶⁴ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 217.

⁶⁵ Juergensmeyer looks at different approaches that may help in curing such religiously motivated violence: (i) destroying terrorism by force; (ii) terrifying terrorists by violent reprisals or imprisonment; (iii) allowing the causes terrorists fight for to win; (iv) separating religion from politics and excluding political actions with religious motivation all together; (v) healing politics with religion – that is helping secular authorities 'embrace moral values, including those associated with religion'. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 229–243, the citation is from 238.

⁶⁶ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 242–243.

St Ignatius sees desire as the central motivation factor. Desire, however, is not free from disordered affections or attachments, that is, things people love or hate. Thus people's bond to these attachments has grown out of healthy proportion, and thus they limit human freedom and cloud human judgment. For this reason, Ignatius goes back from a response of feelings and will to judgment. He points out that when affections become disordered, it is impossible to see clearly, and to discern between what is important and what is less important or even irrelevant, to be aware of the interplay of different motives that move the particular person towards loving or hating, desiring or dreading certain things.⁶⁷

As was said earlier, Ignatian discernment does not work only with the polarised differences between what comes from God and what does not, what is right and what is wrong, what is reality and what is an illusion. When it comes to motives for human response, St Ignatius is aware that most often they are mixed. As Jim Manney says: 'The motives for any important decision typically include the practical and the idealistic, the selfish and the generous, the fearful and the trusting, the realistic and the fanciful.'⁶⁸ Here discernment is able to assist another vital component of resilience, namely the ability to make progress in the spiritual life. It offers a test regarding the direction one progresses towards that can be spelt out in the following way: 'Is this action [towards which I feel spiritually moved] consistent with who I am and who I want to become?' Manney adds that for St Ignatius it means: 'We are open to what God wants, which is what we most deeply want as well.'⁶⁹ In Ignatian tradition, to change the motives of human response

⁶⁷ This recognition goes back to his conversion process that took place after being wounded during the battle of Pamplona. Retrospectively he discovered a difference between desires that guided him, one type of desire leading him back to his former life and the career at the court, the other type of desire opening up a new journey of imitating the life of Christ and the saints. He notes that each of the types of desire formed a different lasting spiritual response in him, one of desolation, the other of consolation. See St Ignatius, *Autobiography* 6–8.

⁶⁸ Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 67. See St Ignatius *Spiritual Exercises* 16, 149–157; 169–188. More detailed instructions come when St Ignatius introduces the meditation on three classes of persons, and when he deals with how to make a good choice of a way of life.

⁶⁹ Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 65, 68.

means to grow in inner freedom, identified as indifference, as a gradual liberation from disordered attachments.⁷⁰

The inner freedom includes also the ability to desire the negative. According to St Ignatius, this includes to desire humility, poverty, whether spiritual or material, the gift to bear insults, following Christ in his suffering.⁷¹ Philip Endean points to the psychological and moral problems involved in the spiritual ‘desire for the negative’, saying that:

The pious imagination easily skips over the point … to understand Ignatius’ petitions properly, we need some account of why and how the invitation to enter into suffering with Christ is distinguishable from irrational masochism. On what basis can we invoke a relationship with Christ as a licence for abandoning common sense? There are also subtler problems. How can we distinguish the authentic selflessness to which Ignatius is challenging us from a mere mirage masking a deeper egoism, from the ressentiment with which Nietzsche classically reproached Christianity?⁷²

Endean’s critique, according to which illusion at the level of human response can lead to psychologically and morally wrong consequences, sheds light on the question as to why, for example, sexual abuse and the abuse of authority took place also among the Jesuits. It goes beyond saying that they, like everyone else, are only human and as such open to

⁷⁰ See St Ignatius, ‘First Principle and Foundation,’ in *Spiritual Exercises* 23. Parmananda Divarkar points out that such a process of liberation is the fruit of a combination of spiritual knowledge, practical following, mission, preaching and ministry to others. He says that in the life of St Ignatius, pointing out that for him this meant ‘opening himself up to the whole strength of God’, where ‘he felt a tremendous sense of liberation, of awakening to a new life that was more real and full of possibilities than the one he had spent so far.’ P. Parmananda D. Divarkar, *The Path of Interior Knowledge: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola* (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Parkash Anand, 1990), 4.

⁷¹ See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 98, 147, 167, 203. St Ignatius is aware of the danger of exaggerating such desires, and thus warns against self-inflicted harm, self-seeking martyrdom and against justifications of creating burdens for others. See also Philip Endean, ‘On Poverty with Christ Poor,’ *The Way* 47, no. 1–2 (Jan./April 2008): 47–66, here 52.

⁷² Endean, ‘On Poverty with Christ Poor,’ 51. In support of his argument, Endean cites a Jesuit psychiatrist W. W. Meissner, who warns that ‘the effort to resolve pride by resorting to humility may only drive … narcissistic impulses underground, so that they find equivalent satisfaction in the exercise of a humility that can make one feel unconsciously superior to the rest of men – who have not achieved such a high degree of humility!’ W. W. Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 104.

sin and failure, because it mentions one of the possible sources of illusion at the level of human response. He also points out that it is vitally important to seek for the journey from illusion to reality even here. He says: ‘If the gospel is true, then Christ has revealed potentials in the human condition for bringing good out of evil.’⁷³ This, however, does not involve trivialising the harm that illusions can do. Instead, Endean opts for going through the harm without justifying sinful behaviour and without a ‘spirituality of world-denial’, for a ‘sense of God’s self-gift to the world should extend to the full range of human possibility’, and, one needs to add, challenging injustice, while praying ‘for those dispositions that enable us to bear suffering, in whatever form it occurs, so that life can come forth’, bearing ‘witness that such transformation is possible’.⁷⁴ It does not happen, however, only at the level of response; one needs to go back to the presentations that impacted on one’s judgment.

3. Conclusion: Resilience, Discernment and Human Fragility

In this article, I have shown that in spiritual life resilience and fragility do not stand in a binary opposition. The fact that people are open to illusions at all the different levels of experience demonstrates such fragility. On the other hand, allusions born out of times of crisis, after people and human communities had to work through what had proved illusory, contribute towards what I have called transformative understanding, one of the ingredients of resilience.

3.1 Divine Grace When People Are Fragile

People are not ‘materials’ that can be stretched and then put back to normal shape. As the article has argued, the processes of adaptation after a crisis are much more complex, and they stand and fall with the interaction between the personal and the communal webs of understanding, survival strategies, communication skills and other competences contributing to a successful recovery, and to strengthening a kind of degree of immunity when the next crisis comes. Theologically speaking, these assisting webs are seen as initiated by and open towards an ongoing gift of grace, of the divine creative and re-creative

⁷³ Endean, ‘On Poverty with Christ Poor,’ 61.

⁷⁴ Endean, ‘On Poverty with Christ Poor,’ 63–66.

energies. Divine-human communication is included, again, in all its complexity and openness to human misunderstanding, illusions and other forms of errors. But precisely because it is an interaction, the human subject is not the only active one. And this is of vital importance when we speak about resilience in spiritual life.

Human fragility includes that in spiritual experience there is an ongoing negotiation between the illusory and the real, for ‘we live in a condition of a perpetual spiritual conflict’ of the two.⁷⁵ Manney states:

It seems that uncertainty is built into the nature of things. The Ignatian conviction that God can be found in all things means that no religious system is ever complete. We will never reach the end of ‘all things’. Some things will always be hidden from us, and something will always come along to make God present in a new way. There will always be surprises.⁷⁶

This means that the perpetual conflict he speaks about has a positive role. If accepted and worked out well, it builds resilience. It includes the possibilities of recovering from shocks, it helps in balancing between an excess of power and an excess of powerlessness.⁷⁷ When speaking about the role of transformative understanding in spiritual life, this article underlined that there is also another balancing going on, namely between human awareness that illusions are woven into the web of our understanding in the way that we are never completely free of them, and that we live and move within a reality that is deeper and broader than all our true and false images of it, and that this reality is active and helpful. It makes it possible to strengthen the elasticity of our understanding and with that a healthy resistance not to change but rather to adversity.⁷⁸ In that context, when illusions are transformed into allusions, people are provided with a liberating understanding, a potential to grow.

⁷⁵ See Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 71.

⁷⁶ Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 253.

⁷⁷ Koubová claims that work with power is central to the different aspects of resilience building. Moreover, in fact, some level of instability in relation to power is healthy, because it prevents people from an excess of obsessive control, as long as one is aware of the other danger, namely of traumatising powerlessness. See Koubová, ‘Společenská odolnost,’ 17.

⁷⁸ See e.g. St Ignatius’s account of his encounter with ‘the very beautiful thing’ in *Autobiography* 19 and 31.

The hard examples of authority and sex abuses or of terrorist acts remind us that there are situations when the integrative processes of spiritual and intellectual understanding are not yet possible. People who either were harmed or who perpetrated harm may not yet be ready to enter such processes, and more basic forms of support may be necessary first.⁷⁹ Then there are patients with mental illness who experience severe hardships without the outbreaks of insights, or people whose consciousness is altered by drugs, just to mention some other difficult examples.⁸⁰ While I will try to include at least partly this problematic in the final summary, I am aware that studying them in greater depth is beyond the scope of this article.

3.2 Discernment Supporting Resilience at the Different Stages of Experience

As presentation is the base of experience, the danger of illusion at that pre-linguistic level is most polarised. If people come with illusory presentations, it is important to pay attention to the possibility that they may be suffering psychotic symptoms of mental illness, and if needed, consult the case with a psychiatrist, in an anonymised way, fully keeping the confidence. Hallucinations or false memories can be also related to some chemical processes caused by medicines or drugs which people are using or by external ideological manipulation. When these possibilities are excluded, other forms of deception need to be explored, and in particular, possible motivations, and the level at which people actively contribute to such deception or self-deception.

⁷⁹ Klára Šimáčková Laurenčíková speaks about situations of people who committed terrible things and first need to find some non-toxic contact with themselves and their basic unfulfilled needs. See Klára Šimáčková Laurenčíková, 'Vítězem obvykle bývá ten, kdo zůstává ještě dluho poté, co už ostatní dávno odešli,' in *Odolná společnost. Mezi tyranit a bezmocí*, ed. Alice Koubová and Barbora Braunová (Praha: Filozofický ústav AV, 2023), 28–58, esp. 29–37.

⁸⁰ See Osborne P. Wiggins and Michael A. Schwartz, 'Schizophrenia: A Phenomenological-Anthropological Approach,' in *Reconceiving Schizophrenia*, ed. Man Cheung Chang, K. W. M. Fulford, and George Graham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–14, DOI:10.1093/med/9780198526131.003.0006, accessed October 23, 2023, www.researchgate.net/publication/229085116_Schizophrenia_a_phenomenological-anthropological_approach; see Timothy Leary, *The Politics of Ecstasy* (Berkeley: Ronin, 1998), and *Chaos & Cyber Culture* (Berkeley: Ronin, 1994); for a contemporary discussion, William Stephenson, 'Timothy Leary and the Trace of the Posthuman,' in *PostHumains: Frontières, évolutions, hybridités*, ed. Elaine Després and Hélène Machinal (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 281–298, in English, OpenEdition Books, <https://books.openedition.org/pur/52532?lang=en> (accessed October 23, 2023).

Illusion as presentation could also mean that human intentionality, that is, human desires or fears or convictions, has grown out of proportion and overshadowed the relationship with external reality.

The sources of Ignatian discernment also work with external spiritual agencies that can be negative. Although Christian spirituality cannot close this possibility down if it does not want to cut itself off from the wisdom of large segments of its tradition, the possibility needs to be treated with much care, so that treating mental phenomena as spiritual possessions is not encouraged. While St Ignatius offers here polarised images of how to recognise in a reflected retrospection what spirit was at work,⁸¹ he is aware that mental encounter with that which emerges as an external spiritual agency is not identical with having that agency's perspective, in other words, seeing that presentation as if from the outside. In this, he is quite close to phenomenology. At the moment of revelation, illumination, consolation or desolation, one cannot say without error what has caused such phenomena. Discernment happens only in a reflective retrospection. Thus also transformation that would turn an illusion into an allusion, a deception into a perception, happens only in reflective awareness, only in retrospect. As, for Husserl, intentionality needed to involve both presentation and judgment,⁸² thus also the possibility of transformation involves presentation and judgment.

While seeking for the differences regarding the levels of experience affected by illusions, it became clear that the level of judgment played a mediating role between presentation and response. This is why a distance, a change of perspective, a liberation often takes place at that level. This is where people can arrive at a deepened understanding of a kind of inner paradoxical 'logic' of spiritual life. Judgments can be revised, illusions turned into allusions. As this level of experience involves language it allows for communication. In the Ignatian tradition, this is with a spiritual director, as well as with the broader community of the church and with all contexts the particular person belongs to. The possibility of transformation at the level of judgment thus draws on insights illuminated or harmed by relationships. That includes both a direct and mediated relationship with God. However, St Ignatius is aware that the process of human judgment is never, not

⁸¹ See the two sets of the rules of discernment, *Spiritual Exercises* 313–336.

⁸² See Husserl, *Logical Investigations* V §17.

even at later stages, completely free of inner and outer voices competing with God, and negatively influencing spiritual progress. Here his approach is less polarised: what is progress and what is regression is at times less clear. And judgment alone is not sufficient for a broader and deeper understanding of the differences. The inner feelings and inclinations of will that give rise to human responses and actions also need to be included.

Coming back to the person touched by an illusion at the level of judgment, the transformation towards a better understanding of spiritual life and evaluation of its different events can be initiated by different means coming out of the relational exchange. Sometimes this is by new evidence that sheds new light on previous judgments. Other times it is by learning from how illusion-based judgments were followed by illusion-based responses, formed illusion-based attitudes and led to wrong actions. In the article, I have used the examples of sexual and authority abuse and of terrorist actions. Even there, processes of transformation are possible but not easy. Liberations from illusions and returns to initial flexibility are often long and painful, as harm to others or self-harm does not disappear just by the change of judgment. But it is a starting point.

The illusion at the level of response, of the movement of feelings and will, as Brentano puts it, or at the level of what Heidegger calls concern/care (*Sorge*), can be based on an illusion taking place at an earlier level of experience. Or as we have seen, an illusion can enter also at this level, as an inauthentic response. Transformation then needs to focus on the possible shifts from inauthenticity to authenticity. It is helpful that human likes, dislikes, desires and fears are worked with in a much more robust way than on the level of judgment. To use Ignatian language, it is about struggles with disordered affections or attachments that move people inwardly towards different directions and cloud their judgment.⁸⁵ If the ‘disposition that includes affectivity and is oriented to decision making’⁸⁴ is to remain flexible and contribute to people’s resilience, learning from illusions and from one’s openness to them needs not to be too quickly delegated to the rational level of judgment. While judgment needs to be included, as it is a mediating level of experience, some kind of transposition has to be made that would allow for

⁸⁵ See St Ignatius, *Autobiography* 6–8.

⁸⁴ Whelan, *Redeeming History*, 10.

a symbolic participatory language to be used that would not reduce the emotional and the volitional dimensions of human desire, which plays a central role here, to the rational dimensions of experience. It can be very fruitful to find ways in which emotions and will are re-included into the ability to perceive truth, or in a more Heideggerian language, ‘the luminosity of Being’,⁸⁵ even if not in an indiscriminate way.

Emotions can mislead people as much as ideas, and likewise, decision-making may be underpinned by corrupt impulses. Acceptance that one can be wrong, and still more having lived and learned from having been wrong at that level, could be as liberating as a profound realisation that our memories can be falsified. In both cases an understanding of where the process has broken down leads to insights concerning where one needs to be careful.⁸⁶ Both Heidegger and the Ignatian tradition are aware that at this level of experience it is hard, if not impossible, to eliminate our disordered inclinations completely, in other words, that a ditch would continue to belong to the path one undertakes. For St Ignatius, this would be a source of humility, a necessary complement to the belief that besides human perception of presentation, judgment and response, there is also a divine perception and divine help that precedes and accompanies every human step. And the gap through which human fallibility has entered is at the same time a reminder of and a radical need for the communion of love with God that reaches beyond human illusions as well as human truths.⁸⁷

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⁸⁵ Heidegger, *Brief über den ‘Humanismus’*, 71.

⁸⁶ See Shaw, *The Memory Illusion*, 241, 255.

⁸⁷ See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 15 and 230–237.

DER BEGRIFF DER ANGST UND DIE THEOLOGIE

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ABSTRACT

The Concept of Fear and Theology

Fears have increased in recent years, both individually and collectively. Such fears about one's own existence can be interpreted in different ways: psychologically, sociologically or politically, but also philosophically or theologically. The article deals with the phenomenon of fear/anxiety from three perspectives on the border of philosophy and theology. In 20th century philosophy, Martin Heidegger defined anxiety as the basic human mood in which man is brought before the nothingness of his existence and thus before himself. This situation of anxiety gives rise to the question of one's own authentic existence. Heidegger's theory has become an essential theory of anxiety, not only within phenomenology, and has significantly influenced further discussion. Emmanuel Levinas reacted to Heidegger with frontal criticism. He placed anxiety in an ethical context and thus gave the term a new meaning. The article presents and contrasts both approaches by Heidegger and Levinas. This is followed by questions for theological thinking that arise from the two thinkers' conceptions of anxiety. These are then discussed and explained theologically against the background of Rahner's way of thinking and taken further. It can be seen that fear is not only a negative phenomenon that needs to be overcome, but that it can also be interpreted in a positive way. Anxiety is that which throws people back on themselves and thus poses the question of the meaning of their own lives with existential urgency. The need for meaning could therefore be seen as the source of the search for a personal God.

Keywords

Theology; Phenomenology; Fear; Anxiety; Martin Heidegger; Emmanuel Levinas; Karl Rahner

DOI: 10.14712/23363398.2024.6

In der Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts ist besonders Martin Heideggers Analyse der Angst als der Grundstimmung, in der der Mensch vor das Nichts seiner Existenz und damit vor sich selbst gebracht wird, zu einer wesentlichen Angst-Theorie nicht nur innerhalb der Phänomenologie geworden und hat die weitere Diskussion wesentlich geprägt. Auf sie hat sich Emmanuel Levinas eingelassen, allerdings mit großen Vorbehalten und frontaler Kritik. Er hat Angst in einen ethischen Zusammenhang gestellt und dem Begriff damit eine neue Bedeutung verliehen.

Diese beiden Beispiele phänomenologischer und ethischer Thematisierung steht Karl Rahners theologische Reflexion über Angst gegenüber. Wie schon Søren Kierkegaard, auf dessen prinzipielle Unterscheidung zwischen Furcht und Angst sich Heidegger bezieht, seine Erwägungen zur Angst aus theologischem Kontext gewinnt, tangieren auch Heidegger und Levinas in ihren Analysen zentrale theologische Fragestellungen, die das Thema „Angst“ eröffnen. Nicht von ungefähr ist es zu Beginn der Pastoralkonstitution „Gaudium et Spes“ des II. Vatikanischen Konzils – aber nicht nur dort – als zentrales theologisches Problem benannt worden und stellt auch in Karl Rahners Theologie ein wichtiges Problem dar.

Im Kommenden werden die Ansätze von Martin Heidegger und Emmanuel Levinas vor- und einander gegenübergestellt. Daran schließen sich jeweils Anfragen an theologisches Denken an, die sich aus den Angstkonzepionen der beiden Denker – trotz ihrer Unterschiedlichkeit – ergeben. Diese werden im Anschluss daran aufgegriffen und vor dem Hintergrund der Rahner'schen Denkweise theologisch erläutert sowie weitergeführt. Auf diese Weise lässt sich exemplarisch aufzeigen, wie phänomenologisches Denken theologisch fruchtbar gemacht werden kann und welche Potentiale in einer solchen Relation stecken. Es zeigt sich nämlich, dass die Angst nicht nur ein negatives Phänomen darstellt, das es zu überwinden gilt, sondern dass sie auch in positiver Art und Weise interpretiert werden kann. Die Angst ist dasjenige, was den Menschen auf sich selber wirft und so die Frage nach dem Sinn des eigenen Lebens mit existentieller Dringlichkeit stellt. Das Bedürfnis nach Sinn könnte somit als die Quelle für die Suche nach einem persönlichen Gott gesehen werden.

1. Der Begriff „Angst“ bei Martin Heidegger

Søren Kierkegaard versteht die menschliche Existenz wesentlich als eine Existenz *vor* Gott. Treue zu sich selbst bedeutet Treue zu Gott. Wer nicht versucht, nach dem eigenen Selbst zu suchen und das eigene Selbst zu verwirklichen, entfernt sich zugleich von Gott. Martin Heidegger reformuliert dieses Kierkegaard'sche Programm in einem ontologisch-existenzialen Entwurf, der nicht mehr explizit auf Gott Bezug nimmt.¹ Auch wenn es zutreffend ist, dass sich Heideggers Angstanalyse ohne den religiös-theologischen Hintergrund nicht verstehen lässt und „die existenzielle religiöse Erfahrung“ zur Folie wird, „auf der sich die Verfallsphänomene der ‚durchschnittlichen Alltäglichkeit‘ des ‚Man-selbst‘ als solche erst abheben lassen“,² ist es genauso richtig, dass Heidegger seine Analysen rein ontologisch entwickelt und verstanden wissen möchte. Die Suche nach sich selbst wird von der Gottsuche abgekoppelt, was jedoch nicht bedeutet, dass das Denken Heideggers nicht mit der Frage nach Gott ringen würde.³ Es lässt sich sicherlich über Heidegger hinaus wieder an die religiös-metaphysische Tradition anknüpfen.

Die Angst hält Heidegger für die Grundbefindlichkeit des menschlichen Daseins, das immer und stets „je meines“ ist.⁴ Mit dem Begriff des Daseins bezeichnet Heidegger die spezielle Art und Weise, wie der Mensch seine Existenz vollzieht. Da menschliches Sein sich anders vollzieht als das Sein eines Steins etwa, lässt sich die menschliche Existenz nicht mit den klassischen Kategorien beschreiben. Es müssen der Existenz adäquate Kategorien entwickelt werden, die sog. Existenzialien, die die Existenz als solche in ihren Vollzügen ausmachen.

¹ Zum Verhältnis Heideggers zum Denken Kierkegaards in Bezug auf den Begriff der Angst vgl. Bettina Bergo, *Anxiety. A Philosophical History* (New York: Oxford University Press 2021), 349–354.

² Vgl. Thomas Rentsch, *Sein und Zeit* in: *Heidegger Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, hrsg. von Dieter Thomä (Stuttgart: Metzler/Springer 2013), 60 f. Als religiös-theologischer Hintergrund gelten vor allem das Denken Augustins und Kierkegaards, jedoch auch zum Beispiel die paulinischen Briefe oder die johanneische Theologie.

³ Bekannterweise ist das Verhältnis Heideggers zur abendländischen Metaphysik und zur christlichen Theologie ambivalent und spannungsgeladen. Zu diesem Verhältnis vgl. z.B. Norbert Fischer/Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Hg.), *Heidegger und die christliche Tradition* (Hamburg: Meiner 2007); Norbert Fischer/Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Hg.), *Die Gottesfrage im Denken von Martin Heidegger* (Hamburg: Meiner 2011).

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer 1993), 12.

Zu den drei wesentlichen Grundzügen der Existenz gehört nach Heidegger, neben Verstehen und Rede,⁵ auch die Befindlichkeit. „In der Befindlichkeit ist das Dasein immer schon vor es selbst gebracht, es hat sich immer schon gefunden, nicht als wahrnehmendes Sich-vorfinden, sondern als gestimmtes Sichbefinden.“⁶ In der Stimmung, die weder Erkennen noch Wollen darstellt, wird die eigene Existenz als ein In-der-Welt-sein und als Middasein als *Ganzes* erschlossen. In der Befindlichkeit wird laut Heidegger der Existenz ihre Geworfenheit und Faktizität erschlossen.

Das Phänomen der Angst wird von dem der Furcht abgesetzt. Die Furcht (in ihren Varianten von Erschrecken, Grauen, Entsetzen, Scheu usw.) fürchtet sich vor etwas Konkremem, das mir innerweltlich begegnet.⁷ Dagegen hat Angst kein konkretes Objekt, vor dem sie sich fürchtet, da die Bedrohung diffus, unbestimmt und „nirgends“ ist: „*Wovor die Angst sich ängstet, ist das In-der-Welt-sein selbst*“.⁸ Das Dasein als solches wird in der Angst letztlich durch die eigene Sterblichkeit herausgefordert.⁹ Es muss jedoch ergänzt werden, dass das Dasein sich nur deshalb um die eigene Existenz ängstigen kann, weil es zunächst und zuerst eine positive Beziehung zu ihr hat. Denn das Sein des Daseins ist nach Heidegger durch eine besondere Verfassung ausgezeichnet, nämlich dadurch, dass es ihm „in seinem Sein *um* dieses Sein selbst geht“.¹⁰ Ich kann mich nur um etwas ängstigen, was für mich wertvoll ist und was mich zutiefst angeht: eben meine eigene Existenz in der Welt.¹¹

Aber zurück zur Angst. Auch wenn man vielleicht auf den ersten Blick geneigt ist, die Angst als ein negatives Phänomen zu verstehen, das überwunden werden muss, wird sie von Heidegger positiv bestimmt. In ihr wird ein ausgezeichnetes Geschehen offenbar: In

⁵ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 133.

⁶ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 135.

⁷ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 140.

⁸ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 187.

⁹ Vgl. Bergo, Anxiety, 341: „However Dasein’s individuation, which it receives through anxiety, lies in the fact of its mortality and in its resolutely facing this possibility.“

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 12.

¹¹ Es wäre mit Emmanuel Levinas zu fragen, ob die Angst die grundlegende Grundbefindlichkeit der menschlichen Existenz darstellt. Setzt das Phänomen der Angst nicht bereits eine Liebe zum eigenen Sein voraus? Levinas setzt sich dafür ein, die Liebe zum Leben, das Glück des Genießens als die fundamentale „Stimmung“ zu verstehen, in der das Subjekt die Welt zuerst und zumeist in ihrer Annehmlichkeit erfährt. Vgl. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalität und Unendllichkeit. Versuch über die Exteriorität*, übersetzt von W. Krewani (Freiburg/München 1993), insbesondere 150–216.

ihr wird nämlich „das Dasein durch sein eigenes Sein vor es selbst gebracht“.¹² Dies bedeutet, dass das Subjekt auf sich selbst geworfen wird und sich ihm die Frage stellt, wie es das eigene Selbst suchen und die ureigensten Möglichkeiten ergreifen soll. Es geht um die dringliche Frage, wie das Dasein es selbst wird, und zwar als ein Ganzes. Die Angst „vereinzelt“ das Dasein und erschließt es zugleich „*als Möglichkeitsein*“.¹³ Die Angst bewirkt laut Heidegger eine Befreiung und zwar eine „*für* die Freiheit des Sich-selbst-wählens und -ergreifens“.¹⁴ Durch die Stimmung der Angst wird das Dasein individuiert. Mit dieser Vereinzelung ist jedoch das Phänomen des „Un-zuhause“ verbunden, das das Dasein aus der alltäglichen Vertrautheit mit der Welt herausreißt, sodass dieses auch mit einer Unheimlichkeit verbunden ist. Offensichtlich stellt die Angst für Heidegger die einzige Art und Weise dar, wie das Dasein seine Suche nach der eigentlichen Existenz anfangen kann. In der Angst ruft sich das Dasein selbst zum eigenen Selbst: Diesen Anruf nennt Heidegger den „Ruf des Gewissens“ als „Ruf der Sorge“.¹⁵ Der Rufer und der Angerufene sind identisch, nämlich das Dasein selbst. Heidegger betont jedoch, dass der Ruf nicht willentlich geschieht: „Es‘ ruft, wider Erwarten und gar wider Willen. [...] Der Ruf kommt *aus* mir und doch *über* mich.“¹⁶ Diese Bestimmung des Nicht-wollen-könnens ist aber konsequent, denn der Ruf entspringt der Angst, die eine Gestimmtheit des Subjekts darstellt, die sich aus der faktischen Situertheit in der Welt ergibt. „Es“ geschieht dem Subjekt, da sich darin seine Geworfenheit äußert, aber nicht sein Entwerfen.

Das Subjekt vermag nach Heideggers Ansicht nicht anders zu sich selbst zu kommen als in der Grundstimmung der Angst, die das Subjekt vereinzelt und freisetzt für das Ergreifen der eigenen Möglichkeiten. Wenn von einer Freisetzung gesprochen wird, setzt dies voraus, dass das Subjekt in irgendetwas „gefangen“ sein musste. Heidegger erblickt diese Gefangenschaft im Phänomen des Verfallens an das sog. „Man“. Die Angst bewirkt folglich eine Befreiung von dem Man, in

¹² Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 184.

¹³ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 188. Heidegger spricht an dieser Stelle von einem existentiellen „Solipsismus“.

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 188.

¹⁵ Es ist daran zu erinnern, dass Heideggers Begriff des Gewissens bar jeder ethischen Konnotation ist und rein ontologisch formal gemeint ist. Der Ruf des Gewissens ergeht im Modus des Schweigens, sodass dadurch Heidegger dieses Schweigen, das zum eigenen Selbst führen soll, vom Gerede des Man abgrenzt.

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 275.

dem das Dasein auf der Flucht vor sich selbst ist: „Das Aufgehen im Man und bei der besorgten ‚Welt‘ offenbart so etwas wie eine *Flucht* des Daseins vor ihm selbst als eigentlichem Selbst-sein-können. [...] In dieser Flucht bringt sich das Dasein doch gerade *nicht* vor es selbst.“¹⁷ Das Verfallen an das Man ist die Weise, in der das Sein des Daseins sich alltäglich „zunächst und zumeist“ in der Welt hält.¹⁸ Dieser Verfallscharakter äußert sich folgendermaßen: „Wir genießen und vergnügen uns, wie *man* genießt; wir lesen, sehen und urteilen über Literatur und Kunst, wie *man* sieht und urteilt; wir ziehen uns aber auch vom ‚großen Haufen‘ zurück, wie *man* sich zurückzieht; wir finden empörend, was *man* empörend findet.“¹⁹ Das Dasein vermag in seiner alltäglichen Durchschnittlichkeit das eigene Selbst nicht zu ergreifen, sondern ist von der Welt und von den Anderen – die keine *bestimmten, konkreten* Anderen sind – „völlig benommen“.

Diese uneigentliche Existenzweise entfremdet zwar das Dasein, es beruhigt jedoch zugleich. Das Man gibt Sicherheit im Sinne des Sich-nicht-abhebens von den Anderen, es führt zur Entlastung, da die eigene Verantwortung für das eigene Selbst nicht übernommen wird, sondern eben von dem neutralen Man vorgegeben wird und sich in Phänomenen wie Gerede, Neugier oder Zweideutigkeit zeigt.²⁰ Aus dem oben Gesagten geht hervor, dass bei Heidegger die anderen Menschen vor allem und fast ausschließlich im Modus des Man anwesend sind. Das Mit-dasein der Anderen und das Mitsein sind Dimensionen des Seins des Daseins. Es gilt: „Die Charakteristik des Begegnens der *Anderen* orientiert sich so aber doch wieder am je *eigenen* Dasein.“²¹ Auch wenn es sich um eine *uneigentliche* Daseinsweise handelt, stellt es keine pejorative Bezeichnung dar: „*Das Man ist ein Existenzial und gehört als ursprüngliches Phänomen zur positiven Verfassung des Daseins.*“²² Die Orientierung an dem, was die Anderen sagen, machen usw., ist eine faktische und primäre Seinsweise, in der sich das Dasein in der Welt befindet. Es steht aber in Frage, ob und wie sich das Dasein aus diesem Man befreien kann, um zu sich selbst zu kommen und die ureigensten Möglichkeiten zu ergreifen. Heidegger meint, die Befreiung

¹⁷ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 184.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 113.

¹⁹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 127.

²⁰ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 167–175.

²¹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 118.

²² Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 129.

geschehe alleine in der Angst, verbunden mit dem Ruf der Sorge. Die Angst ist das *principium individuationis* schlechthin.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich festhalten, dass sich die menschliche Existenz laut Heideggers Untersuchungen in einem ständigen Spannungsfeld zwischen dem Man und dem Selbst hält.²⁵ Wenn das Subjekt aufgerufen wird, das eigene Selbst zu entdecken und zu ergreifen, dann stellt dies eine lebenslange Aufgabe dar. Diese Aufgabe wird von Heidegger jedoch nicht als eine ethische Aufgabe im Sinne einer Lebensführung entfaltet, sondern als ein ontologisches Geschehen des Seins des Daseins, das eine Grundlage dafür bildet, dass die Frage nach einer Lebensform überhaupt gestellt werden kann. Solange das menschliche Dasein ein Möglichsein ist, solange es ein Sich-vorweg-Sein ist, stehen bis zum Zeitpunkt des Todes²⁴ irgendwelche Möglichkeiten offen, die das Dasein ergreifen kann oder eben nicht.

Kritisch lässt sich anmerken, dass Heidegger das Dasein in seiner jemeinigen Vereinzelung zu isoliert sieht, sodass er der sozialen und dialogischen Dimension der menschlichen Existenz nicht gerecht zu werden vermag.²⁵ Aus diesem Grund finden wir bei Heidegger auch keine ausgearbeitete Theorie der Intersubjektivität. Seine Analyse der Existenz bildet lediglich eine Art Vorfeld, auf dem erst eine Intersubjektivitätstheorie im eigentlichen Sinne aufgebaut werden kann. Heidegger selbst betont, dass mit dem Mitsein mit den anderen Menschen keine Ich-Du-Beziehung gemeint ist. Er schreibt: „Wir haben deshalb vorgängig zu fragen. Wie sind die anderen Menschen da? [...] Die Rede von dem Bezogen-sein, von der mitmenschlichen oder gar zwischenmenschlichen Beziehung ist irreführend, weil sie uns zur Vorstellung von zwei polar vorhandenen Subjekten verführt, die dann zwischen

²³ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 129: „Zunächst bin‘ nicht ‚ich‘ im Sinne des eigenen Selbst, sondern die Anderen in der Weise des Man. Aus diesem her und als dieses werde ich mir ‚selbst‘ zunächst ‚gegeben‘. Zunächst ist das Dasein Man und zumeist bleibt es so.“

²⁴ Bekannterweise wird der Tod von Heidegger ebenfalls in seiner existentialen Bedeutung als „Sein zum Tode“ gedacht. Der Tod wird als „die Möglichkeit der Unmöglichkeit jeglichen Verhaltens“ charakterisiert. Vgl. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 262.

²⁵ Zu dieser Kritik vgl. z.B. Markus Höfner, „Authentische Angst. Eine Skizze zum Zusammenhang von Angst, ‚Eigentlichkeit‘ und Religion bei Martin Heidegger,“ *Hermeneutische Blätter* 26, Nr. 1 (2020): 61: „So sehr jedoch ein solches Verständnis authentischen Lebens auf der Linie von Heideggers Artikulation der vorgängigen Einbettung menschlichen In-der-Welt-seins in natürliche und soziale Kontexte liegt, so wenig gelingt es ihm, authentisches Leben als ‚modifiziertes Ergreifen‘ der faktischen Lebensmöglichkeiten einer gemeinsamen Welt verständlich zu machen. Denn dazu müssten *soziale* Formen authentischen Lebens in den Blick genommen werden ...“

den in ihren Bewußtseinen vorhandenen Vorstellungen Verbindungen herstellen lassen. Dabei versperrt der Begriff der Beziehung das Sich-einlassen auf unser wahres Verhältnis zu den andern. [...] Wir haben zu fragen: Wo, womit bin ich, wenn ich *mit* Ihnen bin? Es ist ein *Mitsein* und das heißt: ein mit Ihnen in der Weise des In-der-Welt-seins Existieren, insbesondere ein Miteinandersein in unsrem Bezogensein auf die uns begegnenden Dinge. Sofern jeder von uns sein Dasein als In-der-Welt-sein ist, kann das Miteinandersein gar nichts anderes heißen als ein Miteinander-in-der-Welt-sein. Dabei bin ich jeweils gerade nicht zunächst thematisch auf einen von Ihnen als auf ein vorhandenes Individuum bezogen, sondern halte mich mit Ihnen im selben Hiersein auf. Das Miteinandersein ist kein Verhältnis von einem Subjekt zu einem andern.“²⁶ Das Mit-den-Anderen-Sein ist eine Dimension des Seins des Daseins, jedoch keine Beziehung von Angesicht zu Angesicht. Die Anderen sind entweder im Modus des Man anwesend oder in einem ursprünglichen Miteinandersein im Modus der gemeinsamen Beziehung auf eine gemeinsame Sache.²⁷

Anschlussfähig für das theologische Denken bleibt Heideggers Angstanalyse, wenn es gelingt, den religiösen Bezugsrahmen erneut ins Spiel zu bringen, von dem Heidegger ausgegangen ist und vor dessen Hintergrund er seine Daseinsanalyse gewonnen hat. Seine Hermeneutik der Existenz wird zwar rein ontologisch entwickelt, ist jedoch für ein religiöses Weiterdenken offen: „Glaube und ‚Weltanschauung‘ werden aber, sofern sie so oder so aussagen [d.h. ob sich der Mensch im *status corruptionis* oder im *status gratiae* befindet], auf die herausgestellten existenzialen Strukturen zurückkommen müssen, vorausgesetzt, daß ihre Aussagen zugleich auf *begriffliches* Verständnis einen Anspruch erheben.“²⁸ Es wäre dann die Aufgabe der Theologie zu erforschen, ob und in welcher Weise sich Heideggers Hermeneutik der Existenz für ein theologisches Weiterdenken eignet und ob sie etwa für die programmatische These von Nikolaus Cusanus im Sinne von Gottes

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare. Protokolle – Zwiegespräche – Briefe*, hrsg. von M. Boss (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 1994), 144f.

²⁷ Vgl. Inga Römer, *Das Begehen der reinen praktischen Vernunft. Kants Ethik in phänomenologischer Sicht* (Hamburg: Meiner 2018), 296f. Römer spricht in diesem Zusammenhang auch über eine „Aporie des Mitseins“ in *Sein und Zeit*. Vgl. ebd., 277.

²⁸ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 180.

Zuspruch „sis tu tuus et ego ero tuus / sei du dein und ich werde dein sein“ fruchtbar gemacht werden kann.²⁹

2. Der Begriff „Angst“ bei Emmanuel Levinas

Auch Emmanuel Levinas reserviert für das Thema der Angst einen wichtigen Platz in seinem Denken. Er nimmt die Angst-Analysen aus § 40 von Martin Heideggers „Sein und Zeit“ auf, setzt sich allerdings kritisch mit ihnen auseinander und benutzt sie, um Heideggers Ansatz fundamental in Frage zu stellen. Wie Wolfgang Krewani betont, geht es Levinas zunächst wie Heidegger darum, mit der Hilfe des Angst-Begriffes über das Denken des gegenständlichen Vorstellens hinauszukommen. Emotion oder Affekte reichen für Levinas tiefer als das Denken, wie er schon in seinen Analysen zu Scham oder Ekel aufzuweisen sucht.³⁰ Freilich ist Angst für Heidegger kein bloßes Gefühl, sondern eine „Grundbefindlichkeit“³¹, die das Dasein vor das Nichts seiner Existenz bringt und insofern ursprünglicher ist als das vorstellende Denken, als dieses mit der Hilfe des Bewusstseins versucht, durch Begriffe eine Distanz zwischen sich und das Nichts des eigenen Todes zu öffnen, also in der Weise auf die Stimmung der Angst zu reagieren, dass der Tod in die Zukunft verschoben wird.

In seiner Vorlesung über „Tod, Angst und Furcht“ vom 16. Januar 1976 analysiert und kommentiert Levinas Heideggers Angst-Konzeption, indem er darauf hinweist, dass nach Heidegger das Ausgeliefertsein an den Tod, das sich in der Angst zeigt, zum In-der-Welt-sein gehört, noch bevor das Dasein ein ausdrückliches Bewusstsein davon haben kann. Zeuge für diese „Vergangenheit, die schon vergangen ist“, noch bevor sie im Bewusstsein Gegenwart werden konnte, sei gerade die

²⁹ Vgl. Nicolaus Cusanus, *De Visione Dei* VII, 25 in: Nikolaus von Kues, *Werke I*, hrsg. von P. Wilpert (Berlin: de Gruyter 1967), 303. Der Gedanke wird weiter entfaltet wie folgt: „O Herr ... Du hast es in meine Freiheit gelegt, daß ich mein sein kann, wenn ich es nur will. Gehöre ich darum nicht mir selbst, so gehörst auch Du nicht mir. Du machst die Freiheit notwendig, da Du nicht mein sein kannst, wenn ich nicht mein bin. Und weil Du das in meine freie Entscheidung gelegt hast, zwingst Du mich nicht, sondern erwartest, daß ich mein eigenes Sein erwähle.“ Nikolaus von Kues, *Vom Sehen Gottes*, übersetzt von D. und W. Dupré (Zürich/München: Artemis 1987), 55.

³⁰ Wolfgang Krewani, *Es ist nicht alles unerbittlich. Grundzüge der Philosophie E. Levinas'* (Freiburg/Br.: Alber 2006), 79.

³¹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 184.

Angst.⁵² Abgesehen davon, dass Levinas – wie oben erwähnt – nicht zuerst bei negativen Stimmungen wie Angst, sondern beim Genuss ansetzt, wiewohl auch Scham und Ekel zu den Stimmungen gehören, mit denen er sich beschäftigt, möchte er über den ontologischen Kontext von Angst hinausdenken. Während Heidegger betont, dass die Angst das Dasein mit dem Nichts konfrontiere und es damit vor sich selbst bringe, unterstellt Levinas Heideggers Angst-Begriff eine doppelte Intentionalität, die aufzeige, dass Heidegger dem eigenen Anspruch nicht gerecht werde, wonach die Angst kein Objekt habe.

Heidegger greift eine Unterscheidung von Søren Kierkegaard auf, der Angst von Furcht unterscheidet, wenn er festhält: „[I]ch muß daher darauf aufmerksam machen, daß er [= der Begriff der Angst] ganz und gar verschieden ist von Furcht und ähnlichen Begriffen, die sich auf etwas Bestimmtes beziehen, wohingegen Angst die Wirklichkeit der Freiheit als Möglichkeit für die Möglichkeit ist.“⁵³ Angst bezieht sich demnach auf nichts Einzelnes, sondern eröffnet einen Möglichkeitsraum.

Während Heidegger im Gefolge Kierkegaards betont, dass durch die Angst das Dasein vor sich selbst und vor die Möglichkeiten gebracht sei, sein Leben selbst in die Hand zu nehmen und zu gestalten, sich aber im Unterschied zur Furcht auf nichts genau Identifizierbares beziehe, ist die Angst nach Levinas sogar von einer doppelten Bezogenheit charakterisiert – zum einen von der Intentionalität des „vor“ und zum anderen von jener des „um“. So sei Heideggers Angst eine „Angst vor dem Tod *um* ein Sein, das eben ein Sein-zum-Tode [sei]“⁵⁴. Das Sein-Können sei bei Heidegger zugleich vom Tod bedroht. Zudem – so Levinas – könne das Dasein nicht nur sein, sondern es *habe* zugleich zu sein, genauso wie es zu sterben *habe*, und gelange auf diese Weise zurück in seine konkrete Faktizität.

⁵² Emmanuel Lévinas, *Gott, der Tod und die Zeit*, hg. v. Peter Engelmann (Wien: Passagen 1996), 57.

⁵³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Der Begriff Angst*, in ders., *Der Begriff Angst. Vorworte* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs 1952), 1–170, hier: 40. Zum Verhältnis von Kierkegaard und Levinas in Bezug auf das Problem der Angst siehe Robert C. Reed, „Spiritual Trial in Kierkegaard: Religious Anxiety and Levinas's Other,“ *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 80 (2019): 495–509.

⁵⁴ Lévinas, *Gott, der Tod und die Zeit*, 57.

Für Heidegger ist die gewöhnliche, aber falsche Reaktion angesichts der Herausforderung, sich seinem eigenen Nichts, also seinem Tod, stellen zu müssen, wie erwähnt, die Flucht ins Man. Für Levinas besteht der „Erfolg“ dieser Flucht vor dem Tod, wie sie Heidegger darstellt, darin, dass das eigene Sein-zum-Tode mit einer Flucht in die Empirie in Distanz gesetzt werde. Heidegger zeige, dass der Tod dadurch die Eigenschaft verliere, dass er der je eigene ist – zugunsten der Tatsache, dass es sich bloß mehr um einen „Todesfall“ handelt. In einer solchen Rede über den Tod würden immer nur andere sterben, das „Sterben in seiner Jemeinigkeit“ werde „zum neutralen öffentlichen Ereignis“, zur bloßen „Nachricht“.⁵⁵ Levinas bringt die Konsequenz der Flucht in das Man bei Heidegger so auf den Punkt: „Man stirbt, aber es stirbt niemand.“⁵⁶ Anders gesagt, meint Levinas, dass die in Heideggers Konzeption der Angst schon angelegte Bezogenheit auf ein Objekt nach der Flucht ins unpersönliche Man völlig durchbreche, weil die Angst endgültig zur bloßen Furcht degeneriere.

Levinas führt seine Kritik des Heidegger'schen Angstbegriffs insfern weiter, als er in dessen Bestimmung von „Befindlichkeit“ eine reflexive Struktur und die von ihm schon in Bezug auf die Angst eruierte doppelte Intentionalität erkennt. Einerseits ängstige man sich gemäß Heidegger immer *vor* etwas oder freue man sich immer *über* etwas. Andererseits liege in der Stimmung eine Bewegung, die einen immer wieder zu sich selbst zurückkehren lasse, wie schon die reflexiven Verben andeuteten, die die Stimmungen beschreiben: Jemand freut sich „für sich selbst“ und, „in sich selbst“.⁵⁷ Analog dazu habe Heidegger auch die Angst reflexiv bestimmt, weil er sie mit der Sorge des Daseins verknüpft habe, die eine Sorge des Daseins *um sich selbst* sei. Furcht, aber auch schon Angst führten immer zurück auf eine „Angst um sich“⁵⁸.

Levinas moniert, dass eine solche Angst-Analyse über das Ich nicht hinausgelange, sondern dieses isoliere. Demgegenüber bringt er die Furcht ins Spiel, die um den anderen Menschen fürchtet, also gerade

⁵⁵ Lévinas, *Gott, der Tod und die Zeit*, 58.

⁵⁶ Lévinas, *Gott, der Tod und die Zeit*, 58.

⁵⁷ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt. Diskurse über die Betroffenheit von Transzendenz*, übers. v. Thomas Wiemer. Mit einem Vorwort von Bernhard Casper (Freiburg/Br.: Alber 1985), 253.

⁵⁸ Lévinas, *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt*, 253.

nicht auf sich bezogen sei, sofern die Person, um die jemand fürchtet, nicht bloß als Mittel der eigenen Selbststeigerung angesehen werde. Der im Unterschied zur Angst nur uneigentlichen Befindlichkeit der Furcht bei Heidegger, die Levinas mit dem französischen Begriff „peur“ benennt, setzt er die Furcht für den Anderen oder die Andere gegenüber, die nicht zur Angst um den eigenen Tod zurückkehre und die er „crainte“ nennt.³⁹ Diese Furcht ziele nicht auf die Angst („angoisse“) um den eigenen Tod ab, sondern möchte Heideggers Bestimmung des Menschen als Dasein überwinden, da eine solche Furcht nicht mehr dafür stehen könne, dass es im Dasein um ein Sein gehe, das um seiner selbst willen da ist. Furcht markiere im Unterschied zu Heidegger primär ein „[e]thisches Erwachen“ und eine „ethische Wachsamkeit“ jenseits ontologischer Bestrebungen.⁴⁰ Levinas meint, dass in Heideggers Angst-Konzeption zwar eine Differenz aufbreche, nämlich die ontologische Differenz zwischen Sein und Seiendem, dass damit aber die Ontologie den Vorrang gegenüber der Ethik erlange und diese abgewertet werde, wohingegen Levinas für die Ethik einsteht.⁴¹

Gegen die Interpretation von Angst, die diese für eine Ontologie fruchtbar machen möchte, versucht Levinas eine Analyse vorzunehmen, in der Angst nicht als für den Aufbau einer Ethik ungeeignet ausscheidet, sondern gerade für eine Ethik fruchtbar wird. In der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Buch „Job et l'excès du Mal“⁴² von Philippe Nemo arbeitet Levinas heraus, dass die Angst „die stechende Spitze im Herzen des Übels“⁴³ sei. Das bedeutet, dass sie auf die eigene Krankheit, das eigene Verfallen und – wie Levinas drastisch formuliert – das eigene „Verfaulen“ aufmerksam macht. Die Angst im physischen Übel bedeute das „Nagen an der menschlichen Identität“ und ist für Levinas nicht bloß ein tragisches Wissen um den eigenen Tod. Vielmehr schlage sich die Angst leiblich nieder. Im physischen Übel liegt für Levinas „die eigentliche Tiefe der Angst“. Das Wesentliche der Angst sei nämlich nicht, dass sie „den Horizont des Nichts“ eröffne und über den Tod zum eigenen Sein zurück-, sondern sowohl über das Nichts als auch über das Sein hinausführe.⁴⁴

³⁹ Lévinas, *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt*, 253.

⁴⁰ Lévinas, *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt*, 253.

⁴¹ Lévinas, *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt*, 177.

⁴² Philippe Nemo, *Job et l'excès du Mal* (Paris: Grasset 1978).

⁴³ Lévinas, *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt*, 181.

⁴⁴ Lévinas, *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt*, 181f.

Das physische Übel, in dessen Zentrum die Angst steht, manifestiert nach Levinas etwas, das nicht gerechtfertigt oder ins Sein integriert werden kann. Die Angst – in diesem Sinn verstanden – konfrontiere einen vielmehr mit einer Wirklichkeit, die sich nicht beherrschen lässt. Sie eröffne nicht eine Bahn, die zu sich selbst zurückführt, sondern versetze einen in eine Situation, in der einem der Boden unter den eigenen Füßen entzogen wird, weil sie zu einem Identitätsverlust führe, der nicht wieder geheilt oder aufgehoben werden kann. Man gelange in solcher Angst nicht wieder zu sich selbst zurück – auch nicht durch die Konfrontation mit dem eigenen Tod –, weil die Eigentlichkeit der eigenen Existenz verloren gegangen sei. Denn so verstandene Angst eröffnet für Levinas zwar auch das eigene Ende und jenes der Welt, geht aber über diese hinaus und wirft einen nicht in eine Kreisbewegung, die einen auf sich selbst zurückführt.

Levinas, der mitunter keine scharfe Trennung zwischen den beiden Begriffen „Angst“ und „Furcht“ zieht, verbindet die Furcht für jemand anderen auch mit der Angst um jemand anderen und versucht, eine alternative Bestimmung der Angst in Bezug auf ein Ich zu geben, das nicht die Angst um sich selbst, sondern um einen Mitmenschen quält. Dabei setzt er sich wieder von Heidegger ab. Das endliche Sein zum Tode, das nach Heidegger das Dasein auszeichnet, gibt für Levinas den Hinweis dafür, dass das Sein in seiner Erscheinung immer begrenzt ist. So wird der Tod das Geschehen, das einen aus der Enge der Existenz-Grenzen befreit. Das heißt, dass „die Angst des Seins-zum-Tode [...] auch die Hoffnung [ist], das Weite des Nichtseins zu gewinnen“⁴⁴⁵. Darin besteht für Levinas auch die Versuchung des Selbstmordes, der aber deshalb zurückzuweisen sei, weil gerade die Angst vor dem Nichts des Todes das Ich zwar in der Reflexion des Bewusstseins auf sich zurückwerfe, aber zugleich eine fundamentale Verantwortung

⁴⁴⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Die Spur des Anderen. Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Sozialphilosophie*, übers., hg. u. eingeleitet v. Wolfgang Nikolaus Krewani (Freiburg/Br.: Alber 1983), 309 Anm. 12. ~ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Jenseits des Seins oder anders als Sein geschieht*, aus d. Franz. übers. v. Thomas Wiemer (Freiburg/Br.: Alber 1992), 239 Anm. 10. Die folgenden Zitate im Haupttext entstammen dem Aufsatz „Die Substitution“ aus dem Sammelband „Die Spur des Anderen“, der von Wolfgang Nikolaus Krewani übersetzt wurde. Levinas hat den Text erstmals 1968 publiziert (in französischer Sprache) und dann verändert auch als Kapitel IV in sein Buch „Jenseits des Seins oder anders als Sein geschieht“ aufgenommen, das von Thomas Wiemer übersetzt wurde. In den folgenden Anmerkungen wird jeweils auf die Parallelstellen der beiden Texte hingewiesen. Die Textabweichungen kommen durch die unterschiedlichen Übersetzungen, aber auch durch Textänderungen von Levinas selbst zustande.

aufleuchten lasse. Zunächst gelte, dass der Tod als Nichts „eine Öffnung“ ist, „in der mit dem Sein die Angst vor seiner Definition versinkt“⁴⁶, also die Angst vor der Begrenzung und dem Eingeengtsein der eigenen Existenz verschwindet. Damit untrennbar verbunden ist die Bestimmung, dass die Angst zwar eine Enge⁴⁷ mit sich bringe, aber auch – durch diese hindurch – ins Weite führe.

Das Selbst laufe in dieser Angst zurück aus der reflexiven Selbstbestätigung und Selbstberuhigung in die Unruhe des bloßen Sich, das die reflexive Bewegung des Bewusstseins noch nicht vollzogen hat und aus der Sicherheit der doppelten Struktur des Für-sich auf die ausgesetzte Position des einfachen Sich zurückgeworfen ist. In der Angst könne das Ich nichts mehr *für sich* tun, sondern sei verwundbar und anderem bleibend ausgeliefert. Levinas sieht in der Angst um den Anderen oder um die Andere eine nicht begrenzte, sondern unendliche Verantwortung für ihn oder sie. Im Unterschied zur Auffassung der Angst in einem ontologischen Kontext, wo der Tod das Ich auslöscht und zum Verschwinden bringt, ist die von Levinas in den Mittelpunkt gestellte Angst eine solche, „die stärker ist als der Tod“⁴⁸, genauer: jene, durch deren Enge hindurch man in eine unendliche Verantwortung versetzt ist.

Die mit so verstandener Angst verbundene Unendlichkeit der Verantwortung ist bei Levinas kein Bezug des Ichs zurück auf sich selbst, sondern in der Gegenbewegung dazu eine „Rückläufigkeit (réurrence)“⁴⁹ in sich selbst. Levinas spürt in der Angst eine Bewegung auf, durch die das Ich nicht über den Umweg über das andere seiner selbst zu sich zurückkehrt und so sich mit sich selbst zur Identität bringen kann, sondern ohne eigenen Ausgriff auf die Welt und daher vor aller Verdoppelung des Sich im Für-sich in die Einfachheit des bloßen Sich „zurückläuft“. Dadurch wird das Ich vor all seiner Aktivität passiv und verwundbar gemacht. Für die Affizierbarkeit durch die Welt steht bei Levinas wesentlich der je eigene Leib. Vor allem Einholen der Welt in das eigene Bewusstsein steht also der eigene Leib, der allem anderen ausgesetzt ist und daher immer verletzt werden kann.

⁴⁶ Lévinas, *Die Spur des Anderen*, 309 Anm. 12. ~ Lévinas, *Jenseits des Seins*, 239 Anm. 10.

⁴⁷ Levinas bezieht sich dabei auf die Etymologie des französischen Wortes für „Angst“, nämlich „angoisse“, das sich vom lateinischen Begriff „angustia“ herleitet, was „Enge“ bedeutet. Vgl. Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française, *angoisse*, <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9A1776> (16. 4. 2024).

⁴⁸ Lévinas, *Die Spur des Anderen*, 309 Anm. 12. ~ Lévinas, *Jenseits des Seins*, 239 Anm. 10.

⁴⁹ Lévinas, *Die Spur des Anderen*, 303. ~ Lévinas, *Jenseits des Seins*, 228.

Ohne die Subjektivität auf das Bewusstsein zu reduzieren, möchte Levinas in seiner Analyse der Angst ein Fundament des Bewusstseins freilegen, das diesem logisch vorausliegt. Jenes ist nur durch die erwähnte „Rückläufigkeit“ erreichbar, die vom Bewusstsein des Subjekts zurückfragt auf den Ausgangspunkt des Versuchs, sich selbst über den Umweg, das andere und Fremde in die eigene Ordnung einzufügen, in Sicherheit zu bringen, sich selbst zu schützen und in Ruhe bei sich sein zu können. Das Bewusstsein ruht bei Levinas auf primärer Schutzlosigkeit auf, die einen zugleich auf das andere ausrichtet und für es verantwortlich macht. Er bezeichnet diese „Umkehrung im Prozeß des *seins* [sic]“ als Verzicht auf das „Spiel, das das Sein im Bewußtsein spielt“. Sie ist für ihn ein „Rückzug *in sich*, der ein Exil *in sich* ist“, eine „Unbedingung“.⁵⁰ An die Stelle des Für-sich tritt also das In-sich, das in der Angst freigelegt wird.

Da mit der Rückkehr des Sich in sich nicht nur das Für-sich menschlicher Identität unterlaufen wird, sondern auch der Mensch nicht mehr mit sich selbst eins ist, steht mit dem In-sich, von dem Levinas spricht, auch die je eigene und persönliche Identität auf dem Spiel. Dem Ich ist seine Spaltung in Sich und Selbst verwehrt, sodass es deshalb nicht mehr in die Ruhe der Übereinkunft seiner mit sich selbst gelangt, sondern in die Unsicherheit bleibender Selbstentzogenheit zurückgeworfen wird und die bequeme Position in der Reflexionsbewegung verliert. „Dieses *Diesseits* der Identität läuft nicht auf das *Für-sich* hinaus, worin das Sein sich jenseits seiner unmittelbaren Identität in seiner Differenz wiedererkennt.“⁵¹ Vielmehr führt es zur nie beruhigbaren und daher auch nie endenden Verantwortung für den anderen Menschen.

Wo ergeben sich nun Anknüpfungspunkte für eine christliche Theologie, die an Levinas' Angstanalyse nicht einfach vorbeigehen möchte? Da die Angst für Levinas nicht nur dazu führt, dass das Dasein vor sich selbst gebracht wird, sondern auch dazu, dass seine bleibende Ausgesetztheit aufgedeckt wird, liegt es nahe, darin eine anthropologische

⁵⁰ Lévinas, *Jenseits des Seins*, 236. ~ Lévinas, *Die Spur des Anderen*, 307. (Hervorh. im Orig.) Bemerkenswert ist, dass Levinas in beiden Originaltexten fast exakt dieselbe Formulierung verwendet, die beiden Übersetzungen aber doch erheblich voneinander differieren. Da mir die Übersetzung von Thomas Wiemer näher am Original zu sein scheint, zitiere ich hier diese. Im Original heißt es „une retraite *en soi*“ bzw. „un exil *en soi*“, was Krewani mit „Rückzug *an und in sich*“ bzw. „Exil *an und in sich*“ umschreibt, während Wiemer das „*en soi*“ schlicht mit „*in sich*“, die ganze Wendung also mit „Rückzug *in sich*, der ein Exil *in sich* ist“, übersetzt.

⁵¹ Lévinas, *Die Spur des Anderen*, 309. ~ Lévinas, *Jenseits des Seins*, 239.

Grundbedingung der uneinholbaren Gnadenbedürftigkeit des Menschen zu sehen. Das Fundament der Selbstübernahme der eigenen Existenz verbleibt nach Levinas in der permanenten Unsicherheit, dass die eigene Identität nie gewonnen ist und gefährdet bleibt, weil jede und jeder immer schon verwundbar ist und immer nur vorläufig lebt.

Christologisch wäre die Todesangst Jesu neu zu bedenken, wiewohl Levinas als Jude nur ein mittelbares Interesse an Jesus Christus haben kann.⁵² Dennoch scheint es lohnenswert zu sein, die Ölbergszene vor dem Hintergrund von Levinas' Sicht auf Angst und dessen jüdischen Hintergrund zu reflektieren, weil dabei auch die ethischen Komponenten zu Tage treten, die sonst eher verdeckt bleiben. Es zeigt sich nämlich, dass Jesus nicht Herr der Lage ist, sondern seiner Machtlosigkeit insofern innewird, als seine eigene Identität in Frage steht. Denkt man die Gottessohnschaft nicht ontologisch, sondern ethisch, so würde sie sich in der Todesangst darin erweisen, dass die eigene Bedürftigkeit in die Stellvertretung einer grenzenlosen Verantwortung mündet. Gotteskindschaft bedeutete dann, sich für die anderen verantwortlich zu wissen, ohne auf dem sicheren Boden einer verbindlichen Moral zu stehen oder eine beständige Identität gewonnen zu haben.

Für eine christliche Soteriologie bedeutete die Angst-Analyse von Levinas, dass die Todesangst nicht zuerst jene um die eigene Rettung ist, sondern eine Angst um den anderen Menschen und um dessen Heil. Die Verantwortung für die anderen liegt vor allem in dieser Angst begründet. Sie verunsichert und lässt einen, bevor man sich zu sich kehrt, auf die anderen blicken. Sie führt in die eigene Unsicherheit und gewinnt ihren Anhaltspunkt im Leid der anderen. Von daher müsste auch verstanden werden, was Stellvertretung heißt, insofern man sie nicht ontologisch, sondern ethisch denkt.

⁵² Vgl. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Un Dieu Homme?*, in ders., *Entre nous. Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre* (Paris: Vrin 1993), 69–76.

3. Der Begriff „Angst“ bei Karl Rahner

Auch wenn der Begriff der Angst im Denken Karl Rahners *prima vista* keine prominente Rolle einzunehmen scheint, sind seine wenigen, aber einschlägigen Ausführungen zum Thema – gerade im Hinblick auf eine Verhältnisbestimmung von Phänomenologie und Theologie – von fundamentaler Bedeutung. Bereits in seiner frühen Studie über eine *Theologie des Todes*, die im Jahr 1958 als eigene Monographie erschien, reflektiert Rahner das „Problem der Todesangst“ und konstatiert: „Der Mensch hat mit Recht Angst vor dem Tod. Denn er sollte nicht sterben, denn er hat auch jetzt noch als Wirklichkeit oder geschuldete Forderung jene Lebendigkeit des göttlichen Lebens in sich, die, wenn sie rein und unverhüllt in dieser irdischen Welt sich zum Ausdruck bringen könnte, den Tod von vornherein überboten hätte.“⁵⁵

Zu Rahners Verständnis des Todes gehören traditionelle Vorstellungen vom Tod (1) *als Trennung von Leib und Seele*, (2) *als Folge der Sünde* sowie (3) *als Erscheinung des Mitsterbens mit Christus*. Erkennbar wird bereits hier einerseits der „Einfluss, den Heideggers These vom ‚Sein zum Tode‘ auf Rahners Denken ausübt, wenn er die aktive Rolle des Subjektes, die Tat des Menschen, die Vollendung der Freiheitsgeschichte“ betone; andererseits aber wird diese Aktivität eingeschränkt, „wo Rahner aufgrund der Verhülltheit des Todes den Gedanken entwickelt, Jesus sei im Glauben und Gehorsam gestorben, und damit das Dunkel unseres eigenen Todes in Verbindung bringt, in dem unsere Hoffnung wider alle Hoffnung erscheint. Hier klingt der Levinas’sche Ansatz, nicht mehr können zu können, am ehesten an.“⁵⁴ Das Nichtwissen über den eigenen Tod und „unauslöschliche Grauen vor diesem Ende“⁵⁵ sind nach Rahner ein unwägbarer Grund existentieller Angst.

⁵⁵ Karl Rahner, *Zur Theologie des Todes. Mit einem Exkurs über das Martyrium* (Freiburg/Br.: Herder 1958), 50 (= Sämtliche Werke, Bd. 9, 2004, 376). Die Monographie ist der zweite Band der von K. Rahner und H. Schlier begründeten Reihe „Quaestiones Disputatae“, die im weiteren Gang der Geschichte zu einer der einflussreichsten theologischen Buchreihen im deutschsprachigen Raum avancieren sollte.

⁵⁴ Josef Wohlmuth, *Mysterium der Verwandlung. Eine Eschatologie aus katholischer Perspektive im Gespräch mit jüdischem Denken der Gegenwart* (Paderborn u.a.: Schöningh 2005), 162.

⁵⁵ Rahner, *Zur Theologie des Todes*, 50 (= Sämtliche Werke, Bd. 9, 376).

Eine eingehendere Untersuchung der Angstproblematik erfolgte allerdings erst sehr viel später in einem kurzen, aber noch immer höchst lesenswerten Beitrag, der nur drei Jahre vor seinem eigenen Tod im Alter von 80 Jahren erschien. Unter der programmatischen Überschrift *Angst und christliches Vertrauen in theologischer Perspektive* (1981) analysiert Rahner in grundlegenden Reflexionen beides, die angstbehaftete Abgründigkeit der menschlichen Existenz ebenso wie das bodenlose Vertrauen in eine heilbringende Zukunft.

Ausgangspunkt seiner Überlegungen bildet die „Unterscheidung zwischen Furcht und Angst“, die Rahners Auffassung zufolge „üblich“ geworden sei, ohne dass er namentlich auf Martin Heidegger oder dessen Einfluss auf sein Denken explizit zu sprechen kommt. Gleichwohl ist die phänomenologische Vertrautheit bis in die Sprache hinein festzustellen, wenn er Furcht beschreibt als „ein Verhältnis des bewußten Subjekts zu einem einzelnen, ‚kategorialen‘ Gegenstand innerhalb des Bewußtseins“.⁵⁶ Bevor Rahner auf einen spezifisch theologischen Begriff von Angst zu sprechen kommt, schaltet er zwei grundlegende Überlegungen vor, eine sprachliche und eine philosophische.

Zum einen macht Rahner auf den sprachlichen Umstand aufmerksam, dass im Deutschen zwar der Begriff „Gottesfurcht“ geläufig, die Rede von einer „Gottesangst“ hingegen unvertraut sei. Angesichts der vorausgesetzten Unterscheidung zwischen Furcht und Angst müsse diese Redeweise allerdings verwundern. Denn „Gott“ – und Rahner markiert dieses Wort durch Anführungszeichen als sprachliche Referenz und theo-praktische Reverenz – entspreche theologisch gerade keinem „partikulären Gegenstand als einzelne[m],“ sondern bezeichne vielmehr „eine völlig einmalige, inkommensurable, alles umfassende und nie umfaßbare, jeder Einzelangabe schon vorausliegende, unauflösliches Geheimnis bedeutende Wirklichkeit“.⁵⁷ Die mit Martin Heidegger eingeführte und vertraute Unterscheidung zwischen Furcht und Angst wird theologisch produktiv wirksam, insofern es sich mit Blick auf die Frage des Menschen nach Gott weniger um Furcht als vielmehr um Angst handle. Rahner betont, dass streng genommen die Gottesfurcht auf einen Gott bezogen sei, „den es gar nicht gibt“.⁵⁸ In dieser Hinsicht sei Furcht vor Gott in Wahrheit Furcht „vor einem Götzen“.

⁵⁶ Karl Rahner, *Angst und christliches Vertrauen in theologischer Perspektive*, in: Ders., *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 29 (Freiburg/Br. u.a.: Herder 2007), 94–104: 94.

⁵⁷ Rahner, *Angst*, 94.

⁵⁸ Rahner, *Angst*, 95.

Die sprachtheologischen Analysen folgen – wenn auch unausgesprochen – der Kritik einer Uneigentlichkeit, die nun allerdings nicht einen die Theologie ablehnenden Gestus annehmen, sondern im Gegenteil in konstruktiv-kritischer Absicht vorgebracht werden.

Zweitens führt Rahner die zuvor getroffene Unterscheidung „zwischen ‚kategorialer‘ Furcht und einer ‚gegenstandslos transzendentalen‘ Angst“⁵⁹ weiter, indem er unter Bezugnahme auf Immanuel Kant und Thomas von Aquin die Zusammengehörigkeit beider Begriffe betont und zugleich deren Nicht-Identität festhält. Die zuvor skizzierte und vorausgesetzte Grundunterscheidung zwischen beiden Begriffen weicht Rahner somit auf, um sowohl die Unterschiedenheit als auch die Einheit zu bedenken. Auch wenn Rahners weitere Ausführungen den Aspekt der Einheit und vor dem Hintergrund des transzendentalen Ansatzes den Aspekt der Freiheit betonen, kann nicht übersehen werden, dass er zum einen die Differenz vor der Einheit dargestellt hat und zum anderen die Unverfügbarkeit der menschlichen Existenz betont. Bereits hier deutet sich an, dass für Rahner sowohl der transzendentale als auch der phänomenologische Denkansatz relevant sind, ohne allerdings die entstehende Spannung zwischen beiden Zugängen auflösen zu können.

Für Karl Rahner bedeutet die Tatsache, als Theologe Angst thematisieren und zugleich „in Beziehung zu Gott“ setzen zu müssen, eine „schwierige Situation“⁶⁰. Denn sofern man Gott als „die Garantie für eine letzte Unbedrohtheit des Daseins“⁶¹ verstehen könne, verbiete sich jede Angst. Andererseits kenne der / die durch Bibellektüre geschulte „Fromme“ das „Wirken des Heils in Furcht und Zittern“⁶² sowie die Rede „von der Furcht des Herrn, die der Anfang der Weisheit“⁶³ sei.

⁵⁹ Rahner, *Angst*, 95.

⁶⁰ Rahner, *Angst*, 96.

⁶¹ Rahner, *Angst*, 97.

⁶² Rahner, *Angst*, 96. Vgl. Phil 2,12 sowie die berühmte Schrift von S. Kierkegaard *Furcht und Zittern* (1843) über Gen 22.

⁶³ Rahner, *Angst*, 96. – Im Buch der Sprüche sowie in Psalm 110 heißt es: „Die Furcht des HERRN ist der Weisheit Anfang“ (Spr 1,7; Ps 110,10). Vgl. dazu: Hans Blumenberg, *Matthäuspassion* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1988), 28–32. Blumenberg unterscheidet zwischen einem *Genitivus subjectivus* und einem *Genitivus objectivus*, um die „Furcht des HERRN“ als Beginn, Aufbrechen und Anfang der Weisheit zu beschreiben: „Mich hat überrascht – zu meiner Schande muß ich es gestehen –, wie Ulrich Thoemmes den Wandspruch verstanden hatte. Grammatisch gesprochen mit dem Genetivus obiectivus: mit der *Furcht des Herrn* als der vor dem Herrn. Auf diese Lesart war ich in all den Jahren nie gekommen. Für mich war selbstverständlich, daß es ein Genetivus subiectivus war: die *Furcht des Herrn* als die seine vor etwas anderem,

Die theologische Schwierigkeit ergibt sich somit aus dem Bewusstsein auf Grund einer „Kontingenzerfahrung“⁶⁴, die Rahner zufolge nicht als Defizit verstanden werden muss, sondern als Gegebenheit menschlicher Erfahrung. In Anlehnung an phänomenologische Überlegungen zur Entzogenheit sowohl des Anfangs des menschlichen Lebens als auch von dessen Ende schreibt Rahner: „Wir sind nicht von uns selber; wir haben angefangen und diesen Anfang nicht selbst gesetzt und entschieden; wir sind dauernd angewiesen und abhängig von Wirklichkeiten, Situationen und Hilfen, die nicht zu uns selber gehören, über wie wir nicht selber autonom verfügen; wir gehen einem Ende entgegen, das wir nicht (nicht einmal durch einen Selbstmord) bestimmen können; wir mögen als freie Subjekte so oder so zu allem in unserem Leben Stellung nehmen können. Aber eben dieses ‚Alles‘ haben wir nicht ausgewählt, sondern es wird uns gegeben und genommen, ohne daß wir gefragt werden. [...] Kurz, der Mensch erfährt sich als das nicht in sich selbst allein gesicherte, als das nicht selbstverständliche Wesen.“⁶⁵

Es ist nach Rahner diese „Erfahrung der Bedingtheit“⁶⁶, die eine unausweichliche Situation des Ausgesetzteins und einer radikalen Passivität der Subjektivität bezeichnet und die auf Grund der nicht an Einzelgeschehnisse gebundenen, existentiellen Gegebenheit als „Angst“ und nicht als „Furcht“ zu beschreiben sei. Zwar könne der Mensch diese Angst übergehen und durch sprachliche Umetikettierung oder durch Verschweigen überspielen. Dennoch bildet nach Rahner die skizzierte „[e]xistentielle Ungesichertheit und Kontingenzerfahrung“ den unaufhebbaren „Grund menschlicher Daseinsangst“. Rahners Überlegungen schließen unverkennbar an Heideggers Daseinsanalysen an und zielen im weiteren Verlauf darauf ab, weder in einer nihilistischen Position zu enden noch andererseits die berechtigte Sorge angesichts der menschlichen Grundsituation zu negieren. Rahner sucht vielmehr zu zeigen, dass die Daseinsangst sich konfrontieren lasse mit einer christlichen Einsicht, die er als „Grundexistentialien“ beschreibt:

was zu fürchten eben der Anfang seiner Weisheit gewesen war. Und es stand damit auch schon fest, daß jene Herrenfurcht sich auf den Menschen gerichtet hatte, als er ihn nicht teilnehmen ließ an seinem Paradies, nachdem er sich zum gefährlichen Mitwisser der Erkenntnis von Gut und Böse gemacht hatte“ (29).

⁶⁴ Rahner, *Angst*, 97.

⁶⁵ Rahner, *Angst*, 97.

⁶⁶ Rahner, *Angst*, 98.

Wenn unsere unverfügbare Herkunft, die schöpferische Setzung des unbegreiflichen und immer unbegreiflich bleibenden Gottes ist, der uns (faktisch und aus freier Gnade) in eine Bewegung setzt, deren Ziel die Unmittelbarkeit seiner selbst ist (Gnade und *visio beatifica* genannt), dann kann diese erlösende Grundannahme unserer angsthaften Existenz entfaltet werden in die drei christlichen Grundexistentialien: Glaube und Hoffnung und Liebe.⁶⁷

Was Rahner mit Paulus in biblischer Sprache darlegt, fasst er anschließend noch einmal in einem einzigen Wort zusammen: *Vertrauen*. „Vertrauen“ bezeichnet Rahner nun sehr präzise als „ein freies das Subjekt als solches wagendes und weggebendes Sicheinlassen auf die Existenz als ganze und eine.“⁶⁸

Angesichts der Angstsituation, in die wir Menschen uns gestellt erfahren, charakterisiert Rahner mit dem Vertrauen einen Gegenpol, der weder blind gegenüber dem Vorlaufen auf den Tod noch taub gegenüber dem tröstenden und Vertrauen weckenden Wort Gottes ist. Auch wenn das Subjekt angesichts des Todes nicht souverän über das eigene Geschick zu verfügen im Stande ist, eröffnet das Vertrauen eine hoffnungsvolle Perspektive, die Rahner auch als „Urhoffnung“ bezeichnen kann, die nichts anderes benennt als ein „in Angst angstlos Sichloslassen-Dürfen-und-doch-nicht-Fallen“⁶⁹. Auch wenn in dieser Wendung das Phänomen der Angst „als Grunderfahrung, als Existential“ erscheine, so gilt es zu konstatieren: „Der Schritt auf Gott oder den anderen Menschen hin erfolgt in Angstlosigkeit.“⁷⁰

Bemerkenswert an den Angstanalysen Karl Rahners ist, dass er sein Denken bis zu einem Punkt vorantreibt, an dem die Möglichkeiten eines eindeutigen theoretischen Reflexions- und Referenzsystems erschöpft erscheinen. Es könnte sein, dass die systematische Reflexion eines Menschen von der „Absurdität des Daseins“ ausgehe, während das gelebte Leben, der „Existenzvollzug“, das genaue Gegenteil bezeugt – und umgekehrt. Rahner beschreibt diesen Kipp-Punkt in einer gnadentheologischen Wendung: „Der Mensch hat [...] keine absolute

⁶⁷ Rahner, *Angst*, 99.

⁶⁸ Rahner, *Angst*, 99.

⁶⁹ Rahner, *Angst*, 101.

⁷⁰ Joachim Valentin, „Angst und Vertrauen. Zwei Existentialien und ihre Aktualität,“ *Stimmen der Zeit* 7 (2018): 458–467, hier 465.

Sicherheit darüber, ob er im Stand der Gnade ist.“⁷¹ Es ist diese uneindeutige Situation, die Erfahrung einer Ambiguität auf das eigene Heil und Geschick, die ohne allen Grund die unwahrscheinliche und durch kein Kalkül zu deckende Großzügigkeit des Menschen offenbart. Man kann sich an die Einleitung zu *Totalität und Unendlichkeit* erinnert fühlen, in der Emmanuel Levinas die Unableitbarkeit der Moral als eine eschatologische Dimension des messianischen Friedens umschreibt, wenn Rahner schreibt: „Man wendet sich liebend dem Nächsten zu (ohne diese Liebe noch einmal auf ihre Wahrheit hin zu kontrollieren), man vergißt sich darüber und ist in Frieden.“⁷²

Die Selbst-Vergessenheit, das nicht ängstliche Schielen auf das eigene Ende eröffnet einen Freiraum um des und der Anderen willen, die im Vertrauen auf Gott gründet und auf Gottes Gnade hin sich öffnet. Auch wenn Rahner selbst diesem Aspekt in seinem Beitrag keine größere Beachtung schenkt, öffnet sich in dieser Dimension eine Verantwortung für den und die Nächsten, die der Subjektivität des Subjekts entspricht und das angstvolle Besorgtsein um sich selbst zu überschreiten vermag. In dieser bei Rahner bereits grundgelegten Überschreitung seines eigenen Denkhorizonts bestätigt sich einmal mehr, dass „Rahner mit den ‚Denkkategorien‘ von E. Levinas für seine Gnadentheologie bessere Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten gefunden hätte als mit denen, die ihm von der Scholastik und dem Idealismus her zu Verfügung standen.“⁷³

Für eine christliche Theologie zeigen die Angst-Analysen Karl Rahners, dass Angst und Vertrauen als zwei grundlegende Existenzialien weiterzuentwickeln sein werden; der Dialog mit jüdischem Denken, das mit Emmanuel Levinas zumindest am Rande aufschien, erweist sich dabei als produktiv, um den Gefahren eines Systemdenkens zu entkommen und das eigene Denksystem durch an-archische und diachrones Denken öffnen zu lassen.

⁷¹ Rahner, *Angst*, 101.

⁷² Rahner, *Angst*, 102.

⁷³ Josef Wohlmuth, „Gott – das letzte Wort vor dem Verstummen. Gotteserfahrung bei Karl Rahner und Emmanuel Levinas,“ in *Die Stimme in den Stimmen. Zum Wesen der Gotteserfahrung*, ed. Ludwig Wenzler (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1992), 51–73, hier 72.

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VARIA

«QUALE EUROPA CRISTIANA E QUALE LUTERO?»
A PROPOSITO DI UN RECENTE VOLUME
DI F. BUZZI*

LUBOMÍR J. ŽÁK, NICOLA DE MICO

ABSTRACT

**‘Which Christian Europe and Which Luther?’:
About a Recent Volume by F. Buzzi**

The article aims to draw attention to the book *Quale Europa cristiana? La continuità di una presenza* (Which Christian Europe? The Continuity of a Presence) by Franco Buzzi, a Milanese theologian and renowned scholar of the Lutheran Reformation. It particularly focuses on Buzzi’s intention to explore the relationship between Western Europe and Christianity, not only regarding the developments stemming from the birth and spread of Luther’s Reformation but also concerning the critique of Luther’s thought and reformist work, which continues to characterise certain strands of Catholic historiography and theology. At the core of this critique lies a twofold conviction: that Luther is the instigator of the division of Christianity and Europe, and that he is the primary cause of the decline of European Christendom. The article explains why Buzzi considers these convictions to be entirely unfounded and unjust. Moreover, it demonstrates that his interpretative stance offers important insights, enabling further progress in exploring the theme of ‘Europe and Christianity’ and examining the interconnection between the unity of Europe and the unity of Christianity.

Keywords

Europe and Christianity; Martin Luther and Europe; Consequences of the Reformation; Ecumenism

DOI: 10.14712/23363398.2024.7

* L’articolo è stato sostenuto dalla borsa di studio dell’Università Palacký di Olomouc: “Czech Catholic theology in the context of socio-cultural changes in society” (IGA_CMTF_2024_005).

Il teologo e filosofo Franco Buzzi è ben noto al lettore italiano. Già Prefetto della Biblioteca Ambrosiana di Milano, membro del Collegio dei Dottori della stessa, cofondatore e già Presidente dell'Accademia di Studi Luterani in Italia, ha scritto importanti testi su tematiche da anni al centro del suo interesse di ricercatore, come l'idealismo tedesco, il luteranesimo, le dottrine politiche, giuridiche e teologiche della Seconda Scolastica, riservando un'attenzione particolare alle figure di J. G. Fichte e Martin Lutero, ai movimenti della Riforma e dell'Umanesimo, al Concilio di Trento e alla teologia della Controriforma. Tra le sue più recenti creazioni va citata l'opera *Quale Europa cristiana? La continuità di una presenza*, pubblicata per i tipi di Jaca Book nel 2019 (447 pp.).

Si tratta di un volume ricco di contenuti di natura storica, filosofica e teologica, che propone riflessioni contestualizzate nel grande e complesso mosaico del rapporto tra l'Europa e il cristianesimo, ossia tra l'Europa e la fede cristiana. I suoi quindici capitoli, preceduti dall'*Introduzione*, raccolgono approfondimenti di altrettanti temi, tutti interconnessi e collegati dall'intenzione di mettere in luce le profonde, ampie e articolate radici della cultura europea, impregnata di classicismo antico e di cristianesimo, tenendo seriamente in considerazione la realtà di fatto che il cristianesimo non ha rinnegato i fondamenti del giudaismo. L'autore, senza avanzare alcuna pretesa di completezza, si è proposto di valutare come «il patrimonio di metodi, dottrine, verità e valori che si è chiarito e consolidato nei primi secoli, sia stato trasmesso alle epoche successive, come esso sia stato talvolta anche parzialmente frainteso, contraddetto e nuovamente riscoperto nel prosieguo della storia»¹.

Percorrendo questa strada, Buzzi non ha voluto limitarsi all'archeologia delle correnti storiche del pensiero europeo e alle loro diverse sorgenti di ispirazione. Muovendo da problemi concreti dell'Europa e degli Europei di oggi, si è lasciato provocare da domande le cui risposte, se serie e oneste, comprovano la grande complessità e multiformità della storia, della tradizione e del pensiero del nostro continente. Ad esempio quelle «su come i popoli europei, nell'evoluzione storica della loro cultura, abbiano percepito e vissuto il tema della "diversità" e dell' "estraneità"; se e come siano stati in grado di affermare

¹ Franco Buzzi, *Quale Europa cristiana? La continuità di una presenza* (Milano: Jaca Book 2019), 13.

e mantenere fede al valore, singolarmente cristiano, dell’irrinunciabile dignità di ogni singola persona umana; ovvero, ancora, se, come, dove e quando abbiano saputo perseverare nel sostenere la tesi dell’irrinunciabile trascendenza di Dio creatore². Queste, e altre simili, sono domande che nascono, tra l’altro, dalla constatazione che su quanto viene da esse tematizzato «appare certamente insoddisfacente l’enorme evoluzione in senso laicistico dell’Occidente cristiano profondamente secolarizzato»³.

Il primo capitolo del volume approfondisce il tema delle radici culturali dell’Europa cristiana, intendendo con quest’espressione non semplicemente un complesso di dottrine speculative e di valori etici che hanno certamente impregnato di sé la civiltà cristiana europea, ma «un insieme di metodi e di modalità logiche nell’impiego di pensiero che hanno reso possibile e alimentato – fin dagli inizi del cristianesimo in Occidente – la potente dialettica scaturita dall’incontro tra la rivelazione divina, da una parte, e la ricerca filosofica umana, dall’altra»⁴. Il secondo capitolo esamina la concezione filosofica greca e cristiano-patristica dell’anima, di grande rilievo per la gestazione della civiltà europea, mentre il terzo, intitolato «*Estraneità e appartenenza nel cristianesimo antico moderno*», è dedicato ai temi dell’identità/appartenenza e dell’alterità/estraneità quali dimensioni dialettiche del corpus sociale, intendendo per esso sia la società continentale europea sia quella ecclesiale. Dal capitolo quarto fino al decimo vengono affrontati svariati argomenti riguardanti Martin Lutero e la Riforma: *Erasmo e Lutero in Italia nel XVI secolo: due autori assimilati?* (cap. 4); *La teologia della creazione in Lutero* (cap. 5); *Chiesa visibile e invisibile in Lutero e Johann Gerhard* (cap. 6); *Le vicende della «ragione» secondo Lutero* (cap. 7); *Logos-parola-ragione: Gv 1,1 tra modernità e illuminismo* (cap. 8); *Lutero e la modernità* (cap. 9); *Le arti a servizio della parola nel pensiero di Lutero* (cap. 10).

Anche i capitoli seguenti salvaguardano l’orizzonte ecumenico della trattazione, incentrando l’attenzione sulla dimensione artistica ed estetica della società e della cultura europee. Così l’undicesimo capitolo è dedicato al tema del cristianesimo e dell’eredità classica negli affreschi di Raffaello presenti nella Stanza della Segnatura in Vaticano.

² *Ivi*, 14.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ivi*, 17.

Invece il dodicesimo volge lo sguardo a Wittenberg, per analizzare una delle opere più significative della Riforma: la pala d'altare della chiesa parrocchiale di Santa Maria, dipinta da Lucas Cranach e interessante per «chiunque abbia una sia pur minima preparazione e conoscenza teologica dei principi fondamentali del pensiero di Lutero e dell'evoluzione storica del cristianesimo in Europa»⁵. Il tredicesimo mette a confronto Fichte, Goethe e Novalis quali fedeli/infedeli eredi e interpreti delle idee riformatrici di Lutero. Il quattordicesimo è dedicato alla stagione dell'ecumenismo cristiano e alle sue ragioni, per soffermarsi su un fatto storico sorprendente e comunque reale (e per ciò stesso imbarazzante): che la sensibilità per un'unione autentica e sincera tra i cristiani d'Europa comincia a essere avvertita e manifestata con risolutezza solo nel Novecento.

Il lungo capitolo conclusivo è intitolato *Un'«Europa unita» ancora cristiana?* ed è a firma di Fabio Trazza, professore e giornalista, collaboratore di Buzzi in qualità di curatore della comunicazione della Biblioteca Ambrosiana di Milano durante la prefettura del nostro Autore. Oggetto della trattazione è la *vexata quaestio* dell'identità europea, connessa con la questione dell'esistenza o meno di confini in cui custodirla e consolidarla. L'autore basa la sua stimolante riflessione sul presupposto che l'Europa sia, nella sua sostanza, solo un insieme di narrazioni, tra le quali andrebbero prese in considerazione, per un innovativo e più confacente progetto europeo, esclusivamente quelle nuove. Egli parte da un'idea che non può non apparire provocatoria e realistica allo stesso tempo, in quanto sostiene che

la storia e la civiltà europee legate alle origini greco-romane, al cristianesimo con le sue radici ebraiche, agli influssi islamici, all'umanesimo, all'illuminismo, all'individualismo moderno, così come le norme, le istituzioni, i valori di dignità e libertà, la fiducia nella ragione e nella scienza, le idee di libertà e uguaglianza, sarebbero o così discordanti tra loro, che non permetterebbero di individuare un'unica identità riferibile all'Europa, o così ancorate a simbolici confini degli stati-nazione, da non poter essere generalizzate sino a identità continentali⁶.

⁵ *Ivi*, 285.

⁶ *Ivi*, 351.

Voler arrivare a risolvere la questione dell'identità europea con l'eliminazione dei confini è, a parere di Trazza, un'illusione che spinge gli Europei a inseguire i propri fantasmi ideologici, incuranti e inconsapevoli del terreno su cui si cammina. «I confini possono mutare, allargarsi o restringersi, ma rimangono ineliminabili per la determinazione di ogni essere vivente, individuale o collettivo, dalla singola persona, alla famiglia, all'insieme di una famiglia nazionale o continentale che si voglia»⁷.

Lo scopo della presente riflessione non è addentrarsi nei meandri dei numerosi argomenti trattati nel volume di Buzzi, né procedere a una semplice illustrazione delle principali linee lungo le quali si sviluppa il pensiero dell'Autore (o dei due Autori). È invece connesso con la dichiarata intenzione di Buzzi di valersi di una «*particolare angolatura storica*»⁸, per poter analizzare, a partire da essa, «il problema della “persistenza” o dell’“inconsistenza” del cristianesimo nell’Europa occidentale»⁹. Ovviamente quest’ottica, di centrale valore ermeneutico, è da lui utilizzata anche – e soprattutto – in relazione sia alla persona, al pensiero e all’opera di Martin Lutero sia alla storia e alle conseguenze sociali ed ecclesiali della sua Riforma. Il punto di vista di Buzzi e la sua prospettiva ermeneutica si evincono chiaramente, nel contesto di tali specifici temi, dalle sue stesse domande, che investono alcuni luoghi comuni della storiografia cattolica, e anche di una certa teologia:

È proprio vero che la Riforma, inaugurata da Lutero, abbia introdotto una divisione insuperabile nella compattezza della fede cristiana, infirmando definitivamente l’unione tra i popoli europei? È proprio certo che la Riforma abbia causato o scatenato quel sentimento di libertà e, insieme, quel moto di liberazione che ha consegnato l’Europa cristiana all’arbitrio dei singoli, alle prospettive del soggettivismo individualistico e all’inevitabile deriva di forme irreversibili di laicismo esasperato?¹⁰

⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁸ *Ivi*, 14.

⁹ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰ *Ibidem*. Va ricordato che questi temi, assai diffusi tra gli storici e i teologi cattolici e ortodossi, non si trovano affrontati nella parte storica del documento *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*; il documento è consultabile su: <http://tinyurl.com/lmk5r2l> (accesso: 20. 6. 2023); tr. it. “Dal conflitto alla comunione. La commemorazione comune luterana-cattolica della Riforma nel 2017”, *Il Regno – Documenti*, Supplemento al n. 11 (2013): 353–384, in part. 356–365.

Desideriamo pertanto mostrare, in modo estremamente sintetico, come a tali domande risponda Buzzi e cosa, di conseguenza, potrebbe derivarne – secondo lui e secondo noi – per la riflessione non solo sul tema “Europa e cristianesimo”, ma anche, in particolare, sulla questione del nesso tra l’unità dell’Europa e l’unità del cristianesimo.

1. Lutero fautore della divisione del cristianesimo e dell’Europa?

Questa prima domanda rinvia al giudizio teologico e dottrinale su Lutero consolidatosi e diffusosi grazie ai primi controversisti cattolici e ai papi (Leone X e Adriano VI) del periodo iniziale della Riforma di Wittenberg¹¹. Si tratta di un giudizio molto autorevole, argomentato e mai formalmente smentito dal Magistero della Chiesa cattolica¹² ed esplicitamente riproposto nel Catechismo maggiore di san Pio X¹³. Indipendentemente dai risultati dei lavori dei gruppi ecumenici bilaterali cattolico-luterani apparsi negli ultimi cinquant’anni, la teologia accademica cattolica – se non nella totalità, certamente in una sua parte piuttosto rilevante – continua a riportare quanto fu detto su Lutero in passato¹⁴. Sicuramente non lo fa con il linguaggio e nelle modalità dei primi controversisti o del Catechismo maggiore di san Pio X, ma – stante la necessità di assumere, oggi, un *habitus* e uno stile contrassegnati dalla gentilezza ecumenica – con la certezza di aver inquadrato con

¹¹ Su questo argomento ci permettiamo di rimandare al nostro *Lettere di Adriano VI su Martin Lutero e la riforma della Chiesa* (Roma: Nova Millennium Romae, 2018), in part. 33–50, 190–253. Si veda inoltre Boris Ulianich, “Condanna e rivalutazione di Lutero e della Riforma da parte della Chiesa cattolica”, in Id. (ed.), *Ricordando Lutero a 500 anni dalla pubblicazione delle Tesi* (Foligno: Accademia Fulginia, 2019), 199–246, qui 203–211.

¹² Cfr. Lubomir Žák, “Ekumenický dokument *Od konfliktu k spoločenstvu* (2013) vo svetle vývoja postoja Katolíckej cirkvi k Lutherovi a jeho reformačnému hnutiu” [Documento ecumenico *Dal conflitto alla comunione* (2013) alla luce dello sviluppo della presa di posizione della Chiesa Cattolica verso Lutero e il suo movimento riformatore], *Studia Theologica* 24 (2022): 43–65, qui 54–61.

¹³ Pio X, *Catechismo Maggiore di Pio X* (Roma: Tipografia Vaticana, 1905), sezione: *Breve storia della religione*, parte terza: *Brevi cenni di storia ecclesiastica*, nn. 128–129, 133. Un ampio approfondimento dei rilievi critici del papa, fatti in piena sintonia con i pontefici precedenti, si trova in Carlo Tommaso Dragone, *Spiegazione teologica del Catechismo di S. S. Pio X* (Paoline: Alba, 1956).

¹⁴ Cfr. Lubomir Žák, “Le contraddizioni dell’attuale ricezione cattolica di Martin Lutero e della sua Riforma”, in *Parola e Tempo. Percorsi di vita ecclesiale tra memoria e profezia*, a cura di Melania Marcatelli e Natalino Valentini (Verucchio: Pazzini editore, 2021), 172–185.

precisione la teologia del Riformatore, in particolare i suoi limiti sia dottrinali che epistemologici¹⁵.

Ebbene, al centro di tale consolidata convinzione sta l'idea che Lutero abbia causato un'alterazione della fede cristiana, nella sua articolazione sia come *fides quae*, sia come *fides qua*. Gli si addebitano, dunque, difetti non solo dogmatici, ma anche riguardanti la forma fondamentale dell'atto di fede. Su questo secondo punto, i teologi cattolici sostengono decisamente che nella teologia di Lutero vi sia un'evidente «opposizione verso la concezione cattolica della fede, della storia della salvezza, della Scrittura e della Chiesa», a causa «di una radicale “personalizzazione dell'atto di fede”»¹⁶.

Le convinzioni che si traggono dal volume di Buzzi sono radicalmente diverse. In più di un capitolo del volume i rigorosi approfondimenti delle tematiche teologiche sviluppate da Lutero mettono in luce che i giudizi critici circolanti, come quelli appena citati, non arrivano al cuore delle reali intenzioni/intuizioni del dottore wittenbergheste né rilevano con precisione la peculiarità dei suoi concetti e delle sue certezze teologiche, incluso il concetto centrale della sua teologia, quello di “fede” o, per essere più precisi, di “giustificazione per fede”. Buzzi mostra che si tratta di un giudizio indubbiamente molto complesso, ma in nessun caso eterodosso, fuori cioè dall'alveo dell'esperienza e della tradizione cristiane.

Fa parte di tale complessità il profondo radicamento dei concetti luterani di “fede” e di “giustificazione” nel terreno della teologia della creazione, con conseguenze antropologiche che il volume riesce a mettere ben in luce¹⁷. Queste consistono nel comprendere la fede come

¹⁵ Ne è un recente esempio l'ultimo libro del papa emerito Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale* (Milano: Mondadori, 2023), 96–100, 128–134. Per una dettagliata spiegazione della concezione ratzingeriana di Lutero, incluse le ragioni della critica che Benedetto XVI aveva formulato a più riprese nei suoi scritti, si rimanda a Lubomír Žák, “Přijatý alebo odmietnutý?». Postoj teológa a pápeža Josepha Ratzingera k Martinovi Lutherovi” [«Accolto o rifiutato?». La presa di posizione del teologo e papa Joseph Ratzinger nei confronti di Martin Lutero], in Adriána Biela – Radomír Bužek – Lubomír Žák et al., *Kontexty Lutherovy reformace* [Contesti della Riforma di Lutero], (Praha: Lutherova společnost, 2017), 65–99; Mickey Leland Mattox, “The Luther the Cardinal Did Not Know: Occasional Notes on the Luther of Recent Research,” in Emery de Gaál – Matthew Levering (eds.), *Joseph Ratzinger and the Healing of the Reformation-Era Divisions* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic 2019), 169–189.

¹⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Chiesa, ecumenismo e politica. Nuovi saggi di ecclesiologia* (Cinisello Balsamo: Paoline 1987), 122.

¹⁷ Cfr. Buzzi, *Quale Europa cristiana?*, 101–119.

modus essendi dell'uomo, contraddistinto dal suo spontaneo rivolgersi verso la Parola creatrice del Dio unitrino, ossia dall'innato/originario affidarsi dell'essere umano al Creatore, vale a dire al Suo parlare che crea e conserva nell'essere il creato. Tale concetto di fede, evidentemente ontologico e relazionale, sfocia nella possibilità di affermare: "Io sono"; tuttavia il vero senso di tale affermazione si trova nella specificazione: "Io sono creatura di Dio", ossia "Io sono, in quanto creato e mantenuto nell'essere dall'ininterrotto parlare creatore di Dio"¹⁸.

Buzzi è molto convincente quando mostra che, per Lutero, è esattamente questa dimensione relazionale del credere – e quindi dell'essere umano in quanto originariamente predisposto al dialogo con la Parola del Creatore – a dover fungere da orizzonte interpretativo della fede nel suo relazionarsi con la ragione umana. Se, cioè, com'è ben noto, il Riformatore contrappone la *fides* alla *ratio*, rivolgendo contro la seconda numerose e severe critiche, non è perché egli ha di fronte lo stato paradisiaco della creatura umana, fatta a immagine e somiglianza di Dio, o l'originaria unità tra il suo conoscere e il suo credere. Lutero si riferisce, infatti, a una ragione che si autoalimenta, che si considera fonte del proprio sapere, che ha la presunzione di poter cogliere con certezza la verità dell'essere – dell'uomo, del creato e dello stesso Dio – a partire da sé stessa e solo con i propri strumenti razionali. Le manca completamente la consapevolezza della sua relazione costitutiva e vivificante con Dio.

Nell'ambito di tali considerazioni Buzzi fa capire, dunque, che la concezione che Lutero ha della fede ingloba una feroce opposizione alla *Ichwiller* della ragione¹⁹, al suo ripiegamento su di sé, ed esalta, invece, quel modo di essere-in-relazione-con-Dio della "creatura razionale" che si è manifestato nella persona di Gesù Cristo, Verbo incarnato del Creatore. Il dono della fede, possibile solo grazie al Cristo, svela al credente esattamente la dimensione relazionale del suo essere, conferendogli forza e grazia per poterla abbracciare con fedeltà, malgrado i permanenti inganni di satana.

Dunque, quanto alla prima domanda circa l'introduzione – ad opera del riformatore wittenberghese – di una divisione insuperabile nella compattezza della fede cristiana, il volume offre una serie di

¹⁸ Cfr. *ivi*, 110–112.

¹⁹ Cfr. *ivi*, 165–166.

convincenti e ben argomentate risposte, che potrebbero riassumersi nelle seguenti parole dell'autore:

Certo, l'approccio teologico di Lutero è particolare, rispetto a quello della Scolastica, ma il suo modo diverso di fare teologia, tutto incentrato, com'è noto, sulla “teologia della giustificazione” consente una lettura di fede assolutamente profonda e condivisibile di quei temi teologici che hanno impregnato di sé la cultura cristiana delle origini²⁰.

2. Lutero principale causa del decadimento della cristianità europea?

Ed eccoci alla seconda domanda, circa il sorgere di quel sentimento atipico di libertà e di quel moto singolare di liberazione che avrebbero consegnato l'Europa cristiana all'arbitrio dei singoli, al soggettivismo individualistico e, quindi, al laicismo esasperato. Ma tali sentimento e moto, di valore evidentemente negativo, possono essere attribuiti al pensiero e all'azione di Lutero? Sono stati realmente presenti e attivi in lui come forza propulsoria che fu all'origine del successivo disfacimento del tessuto sociale ed ecclesiale europeo?

Ricordiamo che non solo nel passato, ma anche nel presente esistono non pochi filosofi e storici cattolici convinti di dover rispondere affermativamente a tali domande. L'opera dello storico americano Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, con il sottotitolo: *How A Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, pubblicata nel 2012, ne è un'eloquente conferma²¹. Le sue principali teorie, fortemente a sfa-

²⁰ *Ivi*, 99–100.

²¹ Brad Stephan Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation. How A Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012); tr. it. *Gli imprevisti della Riforma. Come una rivoluzione religiosa ha secolarizzato la società* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2014). Si veda anche Id., “Disembedding Christianity. The Reformation Era and the Secularization of Western Society,” in *Reformatio-n und Säkularisierung. Zur Kontroverse um die Genese der Moderne aus dem Geist der Reformation*, ed. Ingolf Ulrich Dalferth (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 25–55. Ricordiamo che tuttora vi sono storici che interpretano l'opera riformatrice di Lutero e la storia della Riforma in una chiave rigorosamente controversistica, priva di un aggiornamento ecumenico. Si vedano ad esempio le monografie di Angela Pellicciari, *Martin Lutero: il lato oscuro di un rivoluzionario* (Siena: Cantagalli, 2012) e *Una storia della Chiesa* (Siena: Cantagalli, 2015); e i volumi di Danilo Castellano, *Martin Lutero. Il canto del gallo della Modernità* (Napoli: ESI, 2016); Grzegorz Kucharczyk, *Kryzys i destrukcja. Szkice o protestanckiej reformacji* (Warszawa: Prohibita, 2017); Adam Wielomski, *Myśl polityczna Reformacji i Kontrreformacji*, vol. 1: *Rewolucja*

vore della Riforma di Lutero e di tutte le altre Riforme protestanti del Cinquecento, sono state riprese da vari studiosi, anche europei. Uno di questi afferma che l'«impatto più grave e più problematico della Riforma sulla civiltà occidentale» consiste nell'attuale iper-pluralismo, connesso con l'idea, di forte carica relativizzante, «secondo cui tutta la religione è oggetto della sola comprensione individuale, ossia dei giochi di preferenze soggettive e irrazionali»²². Di ciò sarebbe colpevole la Riforma per il fatto di essersi costituita sul rifiuto dell'autorità ecclesiastica e di molti aspetti del suo insegnamento. Il principio protestante di *sola scriptura* avrebbe paradossalmente sancito il soggettivismo esegetico, generando «polemiche dottrinali, divisioni sociali, il caos politico» e aprendo «la strada diretta verso la soggettivizzazione della morale, dei valori morali e dei valori in genere»²³.

Affrontando la domanda in questione dal punto di vista filosofico – e quindi con attenzione alla *vexata quaestio* del nesso tra Lutero e la modernità – e con la consapevolezza dell'enorme complessità non solo della Riforma wittenberghese ma anche delle ragioni della sua nascita e del coevo contesto socio-politico, culturale ed ecclesiale, Buzzi annota:

È una questione difficile e molto dibattuta quella di sapere quale sia stato l'influsso esercitato dal pensiero di Lutero sulla modernità. Forse il problema potrebbe essere studiato meglio capovolgendo la direzione del discorso: in che misura la modernità si è rapportata al pensiero di Lutero? Sotto quale profilo alcuni aspetti caratteristici del pensiero moderno (come la spontaneità, la libertà, l'azione intraprendente nei confronti del mondo) si presentano a noi come un'assimilazione – al limite del tradimento – di alcuni aspetti che qualificano il pensiero del Riformatore di Wittenberg?²⁴

Prendendo in esame la filosofia di Kant, Fichte e Heidegger, Buzzi mostra quanto la modernità «sia rimasta fortemente impregnata di impulsi e schemi di pensiero che proprio in Lutero, all'origine dell'età

²² protestancka (Radzymin: von Borowiecky, 2013); Paweł Lisicki, *Luter. Ciemna strona rewolucji* (Warszawa: Fronda, 2017).

²³ Tomáš Petráček, *Západ a jeho výra. 9,5 teze k dopadům Lutherovy reformace* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2017), 64.

²⁵ Ivi, 68.

²⁴ Buzzi, *Quale Europa cristiana?*, 183.

moderna, hanno trovato spazio e articolata modalità di formulazione»²⁵. Allo stesso tempo mette in luce che i modi della presenza del luteranesimo nel contesto della modernità sono spesso «del tutto secularizzati»²⁶ e quindi non poco alterati. Il concetto di libertà, caro alla modernità, ne è uno dei casi più vistosi. Se cioè Fichte, ma non solo lui, arriva a teorizzare che il concetto di ‘libertà’ sta ad indicare la «libertà propria dell’io che, in sé, da sé e per sé, vince, o meglio, si sforza di superare il non-io, all’infinito», vuol dire che in questa concezione sopravvive solo un piccolo frammento – quello della vittoria progressiva e costante – dell’idea molto più ampia che Lutero ha della libertà, il cui concetto è soprattutto radicalmente teocentrico e cristocentrico. Infatti, secondo Lutero, la libertà sta nell’essere liberati da sé stessi. Dunque il cristiano è, per fede, «un libero signore su tutto e su tutti, e vive in Cristo e in Dio; al tempo stesso, per la carità o per l’amore di Dio nel quale vive, il cristiano vive nel prossimo e per il prossimo, ed è servo di tutti e di tutte le cose»²⁷.

Insistendo sul nesso tra Lutero e la modernità, Buzzi mostra che chi vuole attraversare questo spazio per accusare il Riformatore di essere la causa dello sprofondamento dell’Europa cristiana nella palude del soggettivismo individualistico e del laicismo esasperato ha scelto una strada sbagliata. L’Autore spiega altresì che non è percorribile nemmeno la strada della critica – spesso esagerata e ingiusta – all’ecclesiologia di Lutero. Infatti, coloro che l’accusano di arbitrarietà e di soggettivismo ecclesiologico a causa del suo concetto di *invisibilità* della Chiesa dovrebbero ravvedersi in quanto – e su questo punto le dimostrazioni di Buzzi sono molto chiare²⁸ – tale concetto è connesso intrinsecamente con quello di *visibilità*, rinviando entrambi a un unico schema ecclesiologico poggiato sulla paradossale intuizione agostiniana per la quale la vera Chiesa si nasconde – perciò è presente – nella visibilità²⁹.

Si comprende bene come questo schema non sia stato in alcun modo un invito al soggettivismo o all’individualismo arbitrario di tipo ecclesiologico, né a una fuga dalla Chiesa come istituzione.

²⁵ *Ivi*, 191.

²⁶ *Ivi*, 188.

²⁷ *Ivi*, 185.

²⁸ Cfr. *ivi*, 128–132, 143–147.

²⁹ Cfr. *ivi*, 127–129.

3. Una considerazione conclusiva

Concludiamo sottolineando che Buzzi, sacerdote cattolico della diocesi di Milano e autorevole e apprezzato studioso della *Lutherforschung* italiana, non ha voluto scrivere un’apologia di Lutero né della Riforma di Wittenberg. Infatti il volume non si presenta in tale veste, né esplicitamente né implicitamente. La sua intenzione consisteva invece nel proporre un’ampia riflessione sul contributo positivo e creativo che il pensiero del Riformatore e della sua Riforma ha offerto alla costruzione religiosa, spirituale, filosofica e culturale della “casa europea”. Bisogna ammettere che è riuscito a mostrare in modo convincente che tale contributo non solo c’è stato, ma è stato determinante, creativo e decisamente arricchente.

Troviamo in questa intenzione quel seme di verità che spinse Joseph Ratzinger ad affermare che l’unità – sia della cristianità che dell’Europa – non può essere pensata diversamente, se non come unità attraverso la pluralità e la diversità. Esprimendosi su questo tema in una lettera del 1986, egli scrisse parole che fanno molto riflettere, in particolare oggi, quando la sfida dell’unità, del rispetto reciproco e della diversità riconciliata inizia a interpellare con crescente urgenza sia i popoli e gli Stati sia le Chiese e le comunità ecclesiali dell’Europa:

Certamente la spaccatura è dal male, specie quando porta all’inimicizia e all’impoverimento della testimonianza cristiana. Ma se a questa spaccatura viene a poco a poco sottratto il veleno dell’ostilità e se, nell’accoglimento reciproco della diversità, non c’è più riduzionismo, bensì ricchezza nuova di ascolto e di comprensione, allora la spaccatura può diventare nel trapasso una *felix culpa*, anche prima che sia del tutto guarita⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Joseph Ratzinger, *Progressi dell’ecumenismo. Una lettera alla Theologische Quartalschrift di Tübingen*, in Id. *Chiesa, ecumenismo e politica*, 134. E scrive ancora, anticipando alcune importanti idee espresse recentemente da papa Francesco: «Sulla strada mostrata da Cullmann noi dovremmo per prima cosa cercare di trovare unità attraverso diversità, cioè a dire: assumere nella divisione ciò che è secondo, disintossicare la divisione stessa e ricevere proprio dalla diversità quanto è positivo; naturalmente nella speranza che alla fine la rottura smetta radicalmente d’essere rottura e sia invece solo una “polarità” senza contraddizione. (...) Non è stato forse in tanti modi un bene per la Chiesa cattolica in Germania e altrove il fatto che sia esistito accanto alla Chiesa il protestantesimo con la sua liberalità e la sua devozione religiosa, con le sue lacerazioni e la sua elevata pretesa spirituale? Certo, ai tempi delle lotte per la fede, la spaccatura è stata quasi soltanto contrapposizione; ma poi sono cresciuti sempre di più elementi positivi per la fede in entrambe le parti (...)» (*ivi*, 135).

Il volume di Franco Buzzi è animato da questa stessa convinzione, che gli permette, di conseguenza, di offrire ai lettori e alle lettrici – siano essi specialisti in filosofia, storia e teologia o semplicemente appassionati di cultura – una costruttiva e stimolante interpretazione del passato e una sapiente e speranzosa visione del presente e del futuro del continente europeo, per rivisitarne e capirne la storia, per amarne e apprezzarne la pluralità di culture, per conservarne e difenderne le tradizioni di pensiero e di spiritualità. Per questo ne caldeggiamo la lettura.

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THE JUSTINIAN APOLOGETICAL TURN, AWAY FROM ORIGINAL PETRINE APOLOGETICS*

STUART NICOLSON

ABSTRACT

Christian apologetics is traceable back to Peter's call in 1Peter 3:15–16. To all faithful, he requested that they be prepared to respond in a Christian manner when another questioned or challenged the faith. This developed in the first century and beyond, until the new approach of Justin Martyr in the third quarter of the second century. Justin, following the *apologia* on Aristides' addressing of non-faithful as well as his legal and philosophical background, focused narrowly on a far more intellectual approach and content. This was within the far wider sphere of the general Petrine apologetics. However, with the exception of Irenaeus in the 180s, subsequent apologetics followed Justin's specific apologetics approach, with it becoming narrow in focus, intellectual thus elite, increasingly clerical, and not for ordinary faithful. It was this apologetics that developed over the centuries until the Second Vatican Council *ressourcement* calls to return to original Petrine apologetics for all the faithful.

Keywords

Original Apologetics; Petrine apologetics; Justinian turn; Second Vatican Council; Ressourcement

DOI: 10.14712/23363398.2024.8

Peter's scriptural call to apologetics is foundational. It has three elements, preparation, response, and a good Christian manner, and it was for all the faithful. This is supported by Paul and Jude in Scripture, and the preparation element was a significant focus for the earliest Christians, according to extant sources, albeit these cannot

* This work was supported by GAJU [120/2022/H].

give a clear image of verbal dialogue taking place within and outwith the faithful. The Apostolic Fathers' generation developed from the Two Ways foundational preparation to a more pastoral apologetical content for the faithful, and in the second century this then developed into written apologetas aimed at those outside the faith.

Justin Martyr later took the relatively new written apologia approach along with that of dialoguing with Jews and developed these in a far more lengthy and intellectual way, creating a niche type of apologetics: not for all but the well-educated few, yet clearly a specialist part of the wider Petrine model. However, subsequent extant sources show that apologetics retained an intellectual level that became distanced from ordinary faithful and, later in the Early Church, apologetics was generally the reserve of intellectuals, often clerics. The different apologetical approach of Justin was the beginning of a new way of doing apologetics as later developments show. This Justinian¹ turn in apologetics continued to be the norm through Mediaeval times and only in the last century did apologetics become more accessible to ordinary faithful, first in the English-speaking sphere and then in the apologetical calls and content in the Second Vatican Council's documents.

While the far more general 'The Field of Apologetics Today: Responding to the Calls of Scripture and the Second Vatican Council' shows how apologetics has recently suffered a 'crisis of identity',² the more focused 'Original Apologetics'³ explores more deeply how Scripture and the Council call for a more general apologetics. This paper seeks to distinguish the original intentions of what became known as apologetics from how it later developed, showing how a specific type of apologetics became normative in the Early Church through the Justinian turn. It then outlines how a return to the original intentions for apologetics, making it an integral part of the lives of all faithful, is part of Vatican II's *ressourcement* call.

¹ Not to be confused with the 6th century Emperor Justinian.

² Stuart Nicolson, 'The Field of Apologetics Today: Responding to the Calls of Scripture and the Second Vatican Council,' *Heythrop Journal* 59, no. 3 (May 2018): 410–423, here 410. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/heyj.12985>. DOI: 10.1111/heyj.12985.

³ Stuart Nicolson, 'Original Apologetics,' *Theology and Philosophy of Education* 2, no. 2 (December 2023): 4–12. <https://www.tape.academy/index.php/tape/article/view/33>. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10413418.

1. Establishing Petrine Apologetics

Possibly the first but certainly the clearest and most significant call to what can be considered original apologetics was made by Peter in 1 Peter 3:15–16. Taking the idea of *apologia*, the defence given in response to an accusation, *kategoria*, in Greek legal terms going back at least as far as Socrates, he Christianised it by setting it as integral to the Christian life. The addressees of the epistle (1Pt 1:1) were those in the Christian Diaspora of the 60s, namely here to those in present-day Turkey, who were clearly experiencing not only an unstable situation but also one that offered plenty hostility – by Jews who were increasingly rejecting them (cf. Paul’s many experiences), Greeks who were somewhat accepting but could turn away or demand a quid pro quo of accepting other deities, or possibly even by other Christians in young but established Churches who were developing in their own faith and may have felt challenged by other Christians bringing other Christian thinking. It was a very fluid time and the temptation was surely to withdraw from engagement, especially for Jewish converts who came from a ‘closed’ religion, one that did not engage with the ‘other’.

However, Peter was calling the faithful to engage. And surely this did not apply only to those in the named regions but really for all Christians. His call is not applicable to only that time and place. It was to all the faithful, not just deacons or Apostles, or to others in specific positions. The very fact that the Church later recognised the text’s canonicity and its catholic audience confirms the universal call of Peter in a certain way.

Peter’s call in 1Peter 3 is:

^{15b} Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.⁴

⁴ All scriptural text in this paper is from the RSVCE Bible.

There are three discernible elements to the Petrine call:

- i) ‘Always be prepared to make a defense’,
- ii) ‘make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you’,
- iii) ‘do it with gentleness and reverence’.

The first is for preparation, that is, to have learned sufficiently the content and thus understand what one will communicate. In the traditional Trivium educational system, it is the grammar. The second is to react by responding – to engage with the other who questions or challenges the faith – which presupposes sufficient preparation. The third is to do so in a Christian manner, thus being a good witness and a communicator with a manner consistent with the message.

Therefore, the Petrine call can be categorised as having the aspect of a universal call and the three elements of preparation, response, and Christian manner.

2. Confirmation in Scripture

While the Petrine call can be recognised, the question must be asked whether it was a singular thing, a matter of little consequence, just another minor suggestion of the authors, human and divine. Confirmation of this call by other New Testament authors would confirm and add credence to the call for all faithful to prepare, to respond, and to do so in a Christian manner. While Luke’s Acts furnishes us with plenty examples of Paul’s apologetical activities, particularly to those with various types of authority in chapters 22–26, a confirmation of the Petrine call to apologetics in the Pauline epistles would be significant.

The well-educated Paul is far less to the point than Peter the fisherman. In his second letter to Timothy, his earlier companion, now the new bishop in Ephesus, Paul spreads what can be regarded as a similar call – in terms of the three elements – over several parts of his letter. Of preparation, the reader should

continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable

for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2Tim 3:14–17)

The call to engage can be recognised amongst the more general:

preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. (2Tim 4:2–4)

In several of these verbs regarding communication, which can evoke thoughts primarily of evangelisation, there is a strong probability in such dialogue that responses regarding the faith being questioned or challenged would occur. And a Christian manner is called for in several places, most clearly in his ‘avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers’ (2Tim 2:14) and that ‘the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness’ (2Tim 2:24–5). It can be argued that with Timothy the addressee, Paul considered such potentially apologetical activities as suitable for the overseer of the ecclesial community, for one in a position of authority, education, responsibility. However, it can be said that after having written many letters in his ministry, Paul knew that the content would be disseminated not only to the addresses but also to many others, and Second Timothy has no request that this text remain ‘for Timothy’s eyes only’, thus Paul can be considered as secondarily calling far more faithful to be apologetically active. Further, again with the Church canonising the letter, it should really be regarded as applicable to all faithful where appropriate.

Elsewhere, Paul makes a call that – without explicitly naming them – surely includes all faithful:

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we

may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ [...] (Eph 4:11–15)

After initially naming those with responsibility for what includes apologetically preparing the faithful (v. 11), he later refers to ‘we’ twice. The context of the ‘we’ strongly suggests all faithful, who will then be ‘speaking the truth in love’, which not only includes the Christian manner but also shows apologetics certainly to include building up each other in Christ.

One other notable apologetics source in the New Testament is the Letter of Jude, addressed to the faithful: ‘To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ’ (v. 1). Some have faltering faith because of ‘ungodly people’ (v. 4) and the faithful should ‘contend for the faith’ (v. 3). Preparation is recognisable as ‘building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit’ (v. 20). Finally, Jude calls for them to ‘convince some, who doubt; save some, by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh’ (Jude 22–3). The element of Christian manner is at best implicit in the text; however, the other two elements and the universal aspect are clear.

Therefore, it should be recognised that the call to apologetics was by the end of the Apostolic generation being developed. Coming after Philo’s development in the 50s of the Logos, and surely as part of the growing Greek influence in very early Christian thinking, the idea of speaking out – apo-logos – as a response was being taken from the legal sphere and being Christianised, especially by adding the third element of Christian manner, as a way of engaging others about the faith when questioned or challenged. Peter, Paul, and Jude, with Luke’s recording of many incidents also, show that being ready to respond to others and doing so in a Christian manner was important for all Christians, which is most clearly presented in the Petrine scriptural source.

3. Petrine Developments by the Apostolic Fathers

The Petrine call clearly recognises the obvious: a competent response cannot be made, never mind in a Christian manner – *veritas, caritas* – without at least sufficient preparation. This means that the

first step in following Peter's call is to prepare the faithful in having at least a basic understanding of the faith to enable those of all abilities to respond as best they can, with those of greater abilities answering those presenting more intellectual questions or challenges.

The fundamental understanding of the Christian faith beyond the existence of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the need to follow them is that there is good and evil. It was integral to the teachings of the Pentateuch, especially presented in Deuteronomy – the blessings and curses. It was the duality presented multiple times in the Psalms, Proverbs, the Wisdom literature in the Old Testament. And it was repeatedly presented by Jesus – sheep and goats, wedding guests and outsiders, those in the Kingdom and those otherwise, the user of talents and the one who hides them. This is the fundamental difference between following Jesus and not, being Christian and not. It is the Two Ways code and it was presented to the faithful repeatedly in the second generation of the Church, by the Apostolic Fathers. Clayton Jefford considers this to be a kind of pre-apologetics,⁵ which is preparation.

The *Didache* – the Teachings of the Apostles – presents a Two Ways code in its first six chapters out of 16.⁶ The *Letter of Barnabas* also presents a Two Ways code in its content,⁷ and the *Shepherd of Hermas* includes it in the aphorisms in its 12 mandates.⁸ Therefore, a significant amount of the content of documents of the very Early Church focuses on establishing and concretising the Two Ways in the understanding of the faithful.

The presentation of the Two Ways did not stop there. It is used in the *Rule of Benedict*, establishing Christianity amongst the 6th-century chaos as Rome was falling and a new order was being established.⁹ It was used after Lateran IV which decreed that all faithful attend the

⁵ Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 88.

⁶ 'Didache' in Kirsopp Lake, *Apostolic Fathers* (London: 1912), <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-lake.html>.

⁷ Jefford describes the Two Ways content in *Barnabas* as being in chapters 18–19 (e.g., Lake, *Apostolic Fathers*, 53) but chapter 20 is clearly in the same manner, albeit the form is now 'the bad way is x, y, z; it is not a, b, c'. See 'Barnabas' in Lake, *Apostolic Fathers*, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-lake.html>.

⁸ Jefford, *Apostolic Fathers*, 121. 'The Shepherd of Hermas,' trans. J. B. Lightfoot, *Early Christian Writings*, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd-lightfoot.html>.

⁹ Benedict, *The Rule*, chapter 2, <https://christdesert.org/rule-of-st-benedict/chapter-2-qualities-of-the-abbot/>.

Sacrament of Confession annually as a minimum and the Two Ways code helped priests present a framework of what to confess to those without experience and understanding.¹⁰ And it is still presented today in Gospel readings regularly in churches everywhere.¹¹ It can thus be regarded as fundamental for Christians and a framework of which one should never lose sight.

Naturally, as a foundation, teaching the Two Ways code needs to develop into further areas of Christian understanding, thus preparation. *The Letter of Clement* as a response from the more established authority of Rome to the Church in Corinth in chaos shows developing pastoral content as well as firm guidance on how the faithful should act, that is, with continuity and trust in those appointed in authority, rather than following usurpers who have caused great problems. It is both applicable to that Church and also as a teaching document to others regarding the importance of unity and peace, and also orthodoxy.

Further developed are the letters of Ignatius of Antioch on his way to martyrdom in Rome. The seven letters keep returning to certain themes that are developed along his journey while also covering issues that are presumably pertinent to the particular Church. Repeating themes include unity with the bishop of one's particular Church and being wary of Docetism or Judaisers of the faith. Specific themes include, for example, mentioning to the Magnesians about Sunday being the new Christian holy day.¹² These are clearly responses to what Ignatius either perceived or are issues reported to him by representatives of the Churches. He is on one level apologetically responding to issues at an ecclesial level while providing content that can be presented to the faithful for the purpose of preparing them for presenting these ideas to others. Throughout the documents, a Christian manner of respect for others but more so for God and his teachings is evident.

Other texts could be named also, such as Polycarp's letter to the Philippians. Preparation is key to developing apologetics – the ability to respond effectively and appropriately when others question or

¹⁰ Cf. R. N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215–c.1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), <https://archive.org/details/religiondevotion0000swan/page/n7/mode/2up>, 27ff.

¹¹ For example, regularly in the final weeks of the three liturgical yearly cycles in the Sunday Gospel Readings in the Catholic Church.

¹² Ignatius, *Letter to the Magnesians* 10, in *Early Christian Writings*, revised trans. Andrew Louth (London: Penguin, 1987).

challenge the faith. The content is helpful as a response by Christian leaders to problems or areas needing improved understanding, and can then be used by others as a tool for teaching the faith, that is preparation of the faithful for apologetics, which is a means of removing obstacles for a better understanding of the faith. However, it should be recognised that the length of these texts corresponds generally with those found in the New Testament, which means they are accessible for those in pastoral and educational roles to pass the content on to the ordinary faithful.

4. New Apologetical Approaches and the Justinian Turn

A change in approach took place in the following generation, as distance developed between the Apostolic and current generations. The faithful were in some ways less in a state of flux, however, persecution continued and came increasingly from state and local authorities. The preparation element for the first time, according to extant sources, was being put into writing as a response. This meant apologetics – literally, on paper – was being adapted; of course, perceiving the extent of any verbal apologetics, and the nature of it, is well-nigh impossible, albeit one piece of evidence exists from the 170s.¹⁵ It is right that apologetics adapts to its best fit as it is a response but it is important that it never loses sight of the original Apostolic calls.

The apologia of Bishop Quadratus of Athens to the emperor visiting his city in 125 – because ‘unscrupulous persons were trying to get our people into trouble’¹⁴ – has been lost, albeit it was widely known still at the time of Eusebius,¹⁵ who quickly became in many ways the source for literature that survived the pre-Constantine persecutions,¹⁶ but his strong preference for intellectual content may have rendered this selective.¹⁷ However, we have another text presented at the same

¹⁵ Celsus' lost writing, partially recorded in Origen's later *Contra Celsum*, reported on what may have been apologetical activity, but his particularly polemical slant is not helpful in developing a real image. See especially Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.44 and 3.55, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04163.htm>.

¹⁴ Eusebius, *The History of the Church* (London: Penguin, 1989), 4.3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Historians in the succeeding years depended upon Eusebius as the source, as shown in ‘Early Church Historians,’ *Fourth Century Christianity*, February 18, 2017, <https://www.fourthcentury.com/early-church-historians/>.

¹⁷ Rebecca Denova, ‘Eusebius on Christianity,’ *World History Encyclopedia*, October 15, 2021, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1854/eusebius-on-christianity/>.

time to Hadrian, being that of Aristides the Philosopher.¹⁸ It is the earliest extant actual apologia, that is, a text addressed not to the faithful for preparation but to another in order to explain, to defend Christianity so as to remove obstacles to understanding Christianity in some way – here, to show Christians as not problematic to authorities but rather as good citizens. Tellingly, Aristides returns to presenting a Two Ways style of approach with a development: Four Ways, which in reality is fundamentally Two. He presents the beliefs and behaviour of Barbarians, Greeks (including Egyptians), Jews, and Christians. His Christian manner is somewhat lacking, especially towards the Egyptians: ‘As the Egyptians, then, were more stupid than the rest of the nations, these and such like gods did not suffice for them. Nay, but they even apply the name of gods to animals in which there is no soul at all.’¹⁹ Neither did he restrain his criticism of Greek pagan beliefs, albeit refraining from such direct insults. His mention of the name of Jesus is brief at the beginning and the end. His argument rather was that Christians were excellent and trustworthy citizens – an early aesthetic apologetics.

There was an interesting text that may have provided a good example to the ordinary faithful on how to engage, but this can only be speculated upon, for it may have been more philosophical. However, the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus* was lost. This is a debate between a Christian and a Jew, likely written around 140 by Aristo/Aristos/Ariston of Pella, who may have been either a Christian or a Jew close to Christian belief. In the text,

a Christian is described as conversing with a Jew on the subject of the Jewish Scriptures, and proving that the predictions regarding Christ fitly apply to Jesus; although the other disputant maintains the discussion in no ignoble style, and in a manner not unbecoming the character of a Jew.²⁰

The Christian explains how Jesus is the Christ, against reasoned arguments by the Jew. Origen later describes it as a popular text and Jerome also writes of it. The former indicates it to have been suitable ‘to strengthen the faith of the multitude of simple believers’ and that it

¹⁸ Aristides, *The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher*, trans. D. M. Kay, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/aristides-kay.html>.

¹⁹ Aristides, *Apology*, 12.

²⁰ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.52, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04164.htm>.

was ‘not adapted to impress those of more intelligent mind’,²¹ which means that it was accessible to many Christians, thus answering the universal aspect of the Petrine call. A fragment found in recent years sheds light on the accessibility of language and directness of content.²² This text more than any other of the period points to a more ordinary apologetics taking place:

the author’s reasoning appeared cumbersome and unskillful to Orthodox theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries and failed to inspire admiration for the doctrinal value of the Dialogue in late antiquity. But this lack of internal logic is an argument in favor of the high age of the text, a time in which Christian theology had not yet reached a firm shape.²³

This far more organic and ordinary apologetics points to how it developed as well as it being more accessible to far more ordinary faithful in its time, far more so than the next text for which it very likely provided a model.²⁴

The best known of what are called the Apologists, that is, those who wrote actual *apologias* – as opposed to those who verbally responded – is Justin Martyr. A Greek convert from a legal and philosophical background, who had journeyed through different schools such as Stoicism, Pythagoras, and Platonism, was drawn by the witness of the joy of Christians. Authentic, extant texts are his two *apologias* to authorities and his *Dialogue with Trypho* – significantly developed from Aristides and *Jason and Papiscus*. An examination of his work is beyond the scope here, and the focus is rather on whether he moved away from the elements and universal aspect of the Petrine call.

First, Justin is evidently well-prepared as his content clearly presents Christian ideas and explains – in direct defence as well as the dialogue – the faith. He uses his well-developed legal and philosophical skills in conjunction with his Christian learning and development. This, second, enabled him to respond, in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, which may have been based upon actual engagement with Rabbi Tryphon in

²¹ Ibid.

²² François Bovon and John M. Duffy, ‘A New Greek Fragment from Ariston of Pella’s “Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus,”’ *Harvard Theological Review* 105, no. 4 (October 2012): 462, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23327689?seq=4>.

²³ Ibid., 465.

²⁴ Ibid., 460.

the 130s in Ephesus,²⁵ as well as produce two lengthy apologetias that undoubtedly respond to perceived issues in civil matters. And third, regarding Christian manner, Justin is the earliest surviving apologetical source that properly follows the third Petrine element. With earlier authors having focused more on preparation, this did not apply so much as the content was addressed to the faithful, albeit setting an example was important. The fledgling group of direct apologetias that remain available to us, that is, only Aristides, offered content that was blunt and at times unpleasant to say the least towards some non-Christians. However, Justin had a philosophical background, followed by two decades as a Christian, which seems to have enabled him to appreciate the importance of displaying a good Christian manner. Although he may seem harsh at times with Trypho, he is not rude, according to Dulles, and they part on good terms.²⁶

However, it is in the aspect of a universal call that Justin's approach is not in accord with Peter's call. While Peter calls upon all faithful to be prepared, respond, and to do so in a Christian manner, Justin's intellectual background has him present texts that are not at all accessible to most faithful. While it is a strong development of the fragments we have of *Jason and Papiscus*, Justin raises the content to a level requiring an elite education. The texts are vast in size: there are 142 chapters in *Trypho* which are comparable in size generally to those in Scripture.²⁷ Its length is that of a specialist text or a significant compendium of theology. This renders it useful only for a specialist few, and certainly not in any way for all the faithful; such accessibility would have required re-presentation by specialists capable of teaching it to those with an ordinary or no education. Justin's *First Apology*, to Emperor Antoninus Pius, is briefer with only 68 shorter chapters, but this remains in the specialist area of apologetics when regarded in the light of the Petrine call. The *Second Apology* is significantly shorter while retaining the more challenging style.

²⁵ Jules Lebreton, 'St. Justin Martyr,' *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), accessed April 21, 2023, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08580c.htm>.

²⁶ Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 32.

²⁷ *Trypho* has approximately 69 000 words and 375 000 characters, that is, just short of 210 standard pages, which is around 10 times longer than the Letter to the Hebrews – a useful scriptural text for apologetical preparation – which has approximately 7000 words and less than 40 000 characters.

Justin's new approach – elite, intellectual – was a niche area of apologetics. He took previous *apologias* and the content of other Christian texts, of various extents apologetical, and integrated these with his foundational legal-philosophical background to create highly specialised texts in terms of accessibility – in length and depth of content. In doing so, he returned the *apologia* to the legal and philosophical sphere from which Peter had fetched it a century before. Where Peter – the common fisherman – had universalised a specialist term as he Christianised it regarding both manner and ‘commonising’ it among the faithful, Justin placed it back into the elite legal context while retaining the Christian manner element. Therefore, this approach to apologetics was certainly faithful to the three Petrine elements but it was not in any way addressed to all faithful, as Peter had done, and it certainly was not accessible for the majority of Christians.

This is no condemnation in the slightest of Justin’s content, nor a claim that all apologetics should be accessible to all. There must be room for all levels of ability, specialisation, interest, theme, and expertise within the very wide range imaginable of Peter’s call to all faithful, and questions or challenges of higher intellectual levels, such as those of Celsus and a century later Porphyry, require appropriately intellectual responses. Apologetics, being a response, should adapt to the context and the content of those being responded to. However, any identification of apologetics as being based upon Justin’s example would clearly be to the detriment to the idea of apologetics for all the faithful, and particularly to those unable to access such a specialisation. So it is very unfortunate that this Justinian narrowing is what subsequently happened in the main.

Of course, this is only a variation in method and focus, and intellectual questions and challenges require intellectual responses. Therefore, for this to be considered a Justinian turn, it is necessary for there to have been a continuation of the change, that is, a trend. What happened next was important for apologetics, and the later understanding of its developments.

5. Post-Justin Developments – Petrine or Justinian?

What may have seemed initially as good practice – leaders and experts showing the way to develop apologetics as a means of engaging with secular authorities – meant a significant change in focus for

apologetics. With the exception of Irenaeus, subsequent extant texts show apologetics to have taken a turn to the intellectual, elite, and in time clerical, leaving behind the universal call for all faithful to prepare, to respond, in a Christian manner.

Tertullian, also a lawyer, is known well for his aggressive style, strict approach, and thus was lacking in Christian manner; another legalist, Minucius Felix was on the other hand dove-like but he mostly omitted Christ from his content – perhaps poor preparation, or just a lack of Christ-based response; the *Letter to Diognetus* was shorter but retained a requirement for having had a good education to follow it, albeit it was not so dense as others; Clement continued the philosophical approach while living up to his name; and Origen was lengthy and philosophical. Of interest here, Origen in his mid-third century response to Celsus,²⁸ does not defend the ordinary faithful in their lower quality apologetical attempts so excoriated by Celsus, which would have indicated attempts to prepare them for apologetical responses. Instead, he points out that sharing many of the Christian teachings with the faithful depends on whether it is to ‘intelligent hearers’ or ‘simpler minds’,²⁹ that ‘wherever (our instructors) see [various uncouth groups] they bring publicly forward divine and venerable truths’ with no mention of general faithful but of specialists,³⁰ and then likens such instruction to philosophers teaching rather than the general faithful sharing their faith,³¹ all of which indicate the ordinary faithful not being apologetically prepared or particularly apologetically active by Origen’s time.

Later, Eusebius was a pivot between the persecuted Church and the legal Church in temporal terms, but not only did he focus on particularly intellectual figures,³² most probably using them to seemingly conceal a lack of original content on his part,³³ but there was also the issue of his endorsement of Arianism. Then there was the important bulwark of orthodoxy, Athanasius, whose writings were more dry and less accessible to the ordinary faithful; John Chrysostom was able to speak to the crowds but he did not have Christian manner as

²⁸ See footnote 13.

²⁹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3:52.

³⁰ Ibid., 3:55.

³¹ Ibid., 3:54.

³² Texts available in his library are listed in Andrew James Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 299–311.

³³ Andrew Louth in Eusebius, *History*, Introduction, xiii and xxv.

a priority;⁵⁴ and then there was Augustine who reinforced the clericalisation of apologetics by forming a community of priests around him in the see of Hippo, who then in turn mostly became episcopal figures themselves.⁵⁵

The only one, again a bishop, to have somewhat bucked the intellectualising trend, to address the ordinary faithful with his apologetics, was Irenaeus of Lyons, and this was before the Justinian trend had become established. Irenaeus returned from a Roman winter around 180 to find he was now the only priest of the local Church where most faithful had been martyred, and on becoming the bishop he clearly focused on protecting his flock as is clear in the earlier parts of his writings at least. This included educating them against the prevailing Gnostic heresies, teaching them enough of the content of such beliefs to identify them, and also why they were problematic. This enabled them to explain to others the difference between orthodoxy and heresy, and his writings developed into the five books of *Against the Heretics*. Without doubt, it is not only a valuable text for understanding the problematic nature of such beliefs but it also even developed into the first systematic theology. However, this approach, consistent with the preparation element of apologetics for all the faithful, certainly at different levels of understanding, was not emulated by subsequent extant apologetical writers.

Avery Dulles clearly understands apologetics through this more rigid lens as being intellectual, philosophical, formal. In his for-the-most-part excellent and very helpful *A History of Apologetics*, he states that ‘[t]he writings of the Apostolic Fathers [...] did not themselves engage in what one should call apologetics.’⁵⁶ He only recognises Quadratus, Aristides, and the fragments of the *Preaching of Peter* as apologetical before Justin. And for some inexplicable reason, he entirely omits Irenaeus from his *History*. Therefore, it can be seen that not only did Justin influence apologetics in his own time but throughout Christian history since, with the later embedding of apologetics within the elite, intellectual university system from the High Middle Ages.

⁵⁴ Dulles notes this in Dulles, *History*, 69–70. It can be seen, for example, in John Chrysostom, *Against the Jews*, 3, https://tertullian.org/fathers/chrysostom_adversus_judaeos_03_homily3.htm.

⁵⁵ Cf. Eugène Portailé, ‘Life of St. Augustine of Hippo,’ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>.

⁵⁶ Dulles, *History*, 27.

How did this trend develop and why did the intellectualisation and clericalisation of apologetics come about? The content of apologetics is cyclical: preparation is at least partly made up by taking in the response of previous apologists – as example, model, and as learning the content. When there is a trend developing, without there being a counter-trend, it is possible for that trend to become established, thus pulling subsequent content away from a balanced approach. By placing such a bias on subsequent content, without a correction, the identity and even definition of the whole becomes skewed from the original, whether in a narrowing or an altering in understanding. Over time, without a balancing force – here a different type of apologetical approach, or a return to the original sources – the turn becomes the norm, and the area, field, concept loses touch with the original identity, and thus possibly even the purpose and rationale to some extent.

And so, in time, apologetics became Justinian in nature and identity, the Petrine original apologetics lost its universal aspect, and the Christian manner was lessened in emphasis. It became an academic field for intellectuals and clerics – often the same thing historically. Its purpose was to show Christianity as credible through being rational, intellectually robust. And this separated it from the universal aspect of the original apologetics calls and practice.

But this was not to remain the case. It was only in the early twentieth century that an organic movement of more popular apologetics appeared in the English-speaking world: amongst a number of others, for example, Frank Sheed's

genius was to employ simplicity as a gateway to crystalline clarity. He disdained jargon and arcane philosophical references that do nothing to help the questioning reader. Instead, he used plain English to reveal to the ordinary man and woman the richness of Catholicism.⁵⁷

Other such as C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, Fulton Sheen, and many more brought apologetical understanding to interested ordinary faithful. From both academic and more ordinary backgrounds, and certainly benefiting to various extents from Justinian intellectual apologetical

⁵⁷ Charles Lewis, 'The Writings of Frank Sheed: Here Comes Theology for Everyone,' *National Catholic Register*, August 1, 2020, <https://www.ncregister.com/features/the-writings-of-frank-sheed-here-comes-theology-for-everyone>.

understanding, they were able to present a far more approachable apologetics content to far more faithful and also to those outside the faith.

Then the Second Vatican Council called for a return to original apologetics in many ways.³⁸ This act of ressourcement is clearest in two distinct calls. *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 10 states that: ‘Everywhere on earth [all disciples of Christ] must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.(105)’. Endnote 105 reads ‘Cf 1 Pt. 3:15’. The term ‘bear witness’ includes having a Christian manner – the third element. A stronger call can be found in *Dignitatis Humanae* (DH) 14:

The disciple has a grave obligation to Christ, his Master, to grow daily in his knowledge of the truth he has received from him, to be faithful in announcing it, and vigorous in defending it without having recourse to methods which are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

In both texts, the reference to ‘disciple’ should be understood as all who follow and learn from Christ, that is, a Christian, which is also understandable as preparation. The calls in LG 10 and DH 14 are not alone as related content and other calls can be found in other Council documents.³⁹ It is telling that the Council Fathers, however, did not use the term ‘apologetics’ as it had become, especially in Europe, identified with clerical authority and overly-intellectual argument, feasibly being developments of the Justinian turn that over time increasingly distanced the ordinary faithful from participating in apologetical preparation and activity. The Church has since then not been silent on apologetics. For example, using a Petrine understanding of the nature of apologetics, the popes can be recognised to have spoken about or called for apologetical developments more or less explicitly,⁴⁰ each being at least somewhat

³⁸ Stuart Nicolson, ‘Original Apologetics,’ 9–11.

³⁹ For example, *Gravissimum Educationis* 2 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 31. All Vatican II documents can be found from the contents page at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm.

⁴⁰ Except John Paul I, for example: Paul VI, ‘Ecclesiam Suam,’ *The Holy See*, August 6, 1964, 65, 90, 107, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html; John Paul II, ‘Veritatis Splendor,’ *The Holy See*, August 6, 1995, 109, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081995_veritatis-splendor.html, which cites 1 Pt 3:15; Benedict XVI, ‘Caritas in Veritate,’ *The Holy See*, June 29, 2009, 1, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben

more applicable to apologetics for ordinary faithful than being at the pre-conciliar norm of a higher intellectual level.

Apologetics had lost its pastoral identity and a new understanding of the identity of apologetics was needed. Therefore, only by returning to the original understanding of apologetics, as per the Petrine call, can apologetics be understood as pertaining to all faithful, who need to be prepared so they can respond when questioned or challenged about the faith, and to do so in a Christian manner.

Conclusion

Original apologetics, which can be encapsulated as Petrine apologetics, stems from the Apostolic generation and is supported also by Paul and Jude, as well as how an understanding of the faith was considered as important by the Apostolic Fathers. Recognisable as having three elements – preparation, response, in a Christian manner – and being for all Christians as integral in their faith life, it is evident in many extant Early Church documents in different ways, especially with a focus on preparing the faithful using the Two Ways foundational thinking and pastoral apologetics.

Developing the newer approaches of dialogue and apologias to those outside the faith, Justin Martyr offered a far more significantly intellectualised apologetics, which was inaccessible to many of the faithful. This valid development in a niche and narrow way, however, developed into a trend that became established as the norm, with especially Eusebius filtering out any texts deemed to be of a lower quality, and Augustine particularly contributing to the clericalising trend that developed with apologetics. The ordinary faithful became distanced from learning how to explain their faith to others, and doing so appropriately. This trend continued in the Mediaeval period, especially through the new university system.

However, there was an organic development of more ordinary apologetics in the English-speaking sphere around the turn of the twentieth century. This continued and, in the middle of the century, the Second Vatican Council – which does not mention ‘apologetics’

-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html; Francis, ‘Evangelii Gaudium,’ *The Holy See*, November 24, 2013, 132, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

explicitly – included two distinct ressourcement calls to all faithful that include all three elements of original apologetics as found in the Petrine call. In this distinguishing of Justinian apologetics – remarkable for its absence in the documents – from Petrine apologetics, it is clear that the Church called for a return to original apologetics at Vatican II.

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THE INCARNATION MYSTERY IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHN OF THE CROSS AS A REVERBERATION OF JOHANNINE CHRISTOLOGY*

MARIE HLAVÁČOVÁ

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the influence of bible tradition and especially of Johannine Christology in the writings of John of the Cross, a Spanish Carmelite from the 16th century known for his mystical doctrine. It will be focused on the role of the mystery of the Incarnation during the process of uniting the soul with God. After explaining the method of analysis, the author presents conclusions on Johannine influence in *Romances based on the Gospel 'In principio erat verbum'* – a poetic paraphrase of the *Gospel of John* revealing John of the Cross's conception of the Incarnation mystery. Findings concerning his presentation of the Incarnation mystery in his prosaic commentaries follow next. Finally, the article offers a brief overview of the impact of John 14–17 on the saint's teaching about the anticipation of celestial glory.

Keywords

Mysticism; John of the Cross; Johannine Christology; Incarnation

DOI: 10.14712/23363398.2024.9

Martin Heidegger claims that '[tradition] blocks our access to those primordial "sources" from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed, it makes us forget that they have had such an origin.'¹

In a religious context, those who cannot be made to forget that origin because they are awakened to its existence and gradually drawn nearer

* The article has been supported by the project GAUK no. 400221.

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell publishers, 2001), 43.

and nearer in its presence, thus gaining access to those primordial ‘sources’, are called mystics. Their mission is to accept the awareness of the origin and bring it forward for the rest of us to see more clearly the non-self-evident character of existence (being).

Throughout the 20th century, mysticism – a special way of experiencing God’s presence and action in one’s life – gradually gained acceptance as a privileged source of newly established spiritual theology, a theological discipline which examines the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying action in a Christian’s life. The importance of Christian mystics, not only as shining examples of what it really means to live as a Christian (i.e. God’s grateful and faithful child) but also as genuine teachers capable of introducing others to the mysteries of faith, was emphasised by such prominent theologians as K. Rahner, H. U. von Balthasar and others.² After all, most of the contemporary teaching of spiritual theology about the soul’s union with God draws from the writings of medieval and early modern mystics, especially Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and their disciples, such as Teresa of Lisieux, Elisabeth of Trinity, Edith Stein (Teresa Benedicta of the Cross) and others.

This acknowledgement of mystical writings as a relevant source of academic research brought about an expansion of specialised studies dedicated to different aspects of their doctrine in the second half of the last century. In the case of John of the Cross, ‘Master of Faith’³, generally appreciated for his insight into the process of mystical transformation of the soul on her way towards the union with God, the depth of his experience and thoughts seems to be nearly as inexhaustible as the mysteries of faith themselves: despite the immense multitude of articles and treatises inspired by his literal heritage, some of its facets always remain open to further investigation or different evaluation.

Why John of the Cross? While previous centuries tended to accentuate the negative dimension of his doctrine, associating him mostly with the terms ‘darkness’, ‘purification’, ‘self-denial’, and ‘void’, at least implicitly casting doubts about his acceptance of Incarnation and the role of Christ in the soul’s ascension towards an unreachable God, in the last decades we are on our way to rediscover him as an outstanding

² Cf. Vojtěch Kohut, ‘Zkušenost křesťanská,’ in *Slovník spirituality*, ed. Stefano De Fiores (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1999), 1225–1229.

³ Cf. John Paul II. *Lettera apostolica Maestro della Fede*. December 14, 1990. https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/apost_letters/1990/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19901214_juan-de-la-cruz.html.

poet, a great admirer of God's beauty and indulgence, and an avid reader of the Sacred Scripture whose literary production rests upon a very sound and profound Christology.⁴ In this line of research, this article traces the underlying influence of Johannine Christology in the mystic's passionate admiration of the Incarnation mystery.

1. Why Incarnation

At the beginning of this section it is necessary to quote the following text, which we find at the end of *Spiritual Canticle* (SC):

One of the main reasons for the desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ [Phil. 1:25] is to see him face to face and thoroughly understand the *profound and eternal mysteries of his Incarnation*, which is by no means the lesser part of beatitude. As Christ himself says to the Father in St. John's Gospel: This is eternal life, that they know you, the one true God, and your Son Jesus Christ whom you have sent [Jn. 17:3]. The first thing a person desires to do after having come a long distance is to see and converse with a deeply loved one; similarly, the first thing the soul desires on coming to the vision of God is to know and enjoy the *deep secrets and mysteries of the Incarnation* and the ancient ways of God dependent on it.⁵

Sanjuanist scholars currently recognize as authentic four major prose works concerned with principles of spiritual (mystic) life – two of them existing in two genuine editions – about ten poems, approximately thirty letters, a collection of sayings and two short writings known as *Precautions and Counsels*. While the four major writings – originally intended as commentaries on his verses – explain John of the Cross's doctrine on the spiritual journey towards the union with God, the rest of them (poems, letters, sayings, *Counsels and Precautions*) have more private character and offer glimpses into his personality, mystical experience, and style of spiritual direction. Thus, the latter has hardly anything to add to the doctrinal content of the major works about the Incarnation, so they were not used in the research, with one

⁴ Cf. A thorough analysis of John of the Cross's Christology presents Florencio García Muñoz, 'Una Palabra habló el Padre que fue su Hijo.' *Jesucristo en San Juan de la Cruz* (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2014).

⁵ Canticle 37,1. St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* [Revised Edition]. ICS Publications. Kindle Edition.

exception: there are several reasons to include a poem called *Romances on the Gospel ‘In principio erat verbum’*⁶ and even to open the analysis with it. A poetic narrative vision of intra-trinitarian relations and their manifestation through the creation and Incarnation, based on the text of the Fourth Gospel, opens a unique insight into the author’s notion of Trinity and Incarnation – the two fundamental mysteries in the core of Christian faith. It has therefore essential importance for an assessment of his opinion on those mysteries: it is therefore the first reason why to start the analysis with this work. Besides, the fact that it clearly announces a close relationship to the Johannine Gospel in its title is calling for an evaluation of the extent and nature of Johannine’s influence. Third, it counts among the saint’s oldest literary creations; therefore, the mystical-theological vision described in the poem might be seen as a kind of ‘introduction’ to his later writings,⁷ especially to his doctrinal commentaries.

The choice of an appropriate method of analysis was a challenging task as the methods normally used to analyse poetry do not reveal the theological message easily (if at all). There are no special methods designed to extract a theological/doctrinal meaning from a poetic text, except hermeneutics and exegesis employed in biblical research. The problem of their application, in this case, lies primarily in the fact that they are methods developed to examine one particular text, not to compare two texts with each other or to identify passages in which the influence of an earlier author on the work of a later author is evident. For the analysis of *Romances*, the methodology settled on a comparison based on linguistic as well as semantic analysis, i.e. it focused on the occurrence of the same terms in *Romances* and the *Gospel of John* and the comparison of their meaning in both works.

⁶ The experts are divided in the approach if this is a single ‘romance’ (a poetic composition written in the rhythmic scheme typical of Spanish folk poetry, whose rhythmic scheme is characterised by the repetition of the same rhyme at the end of all the even verses and the absence of any rhyme in the odd verses) and the view that it is a cycle of nine ‘romances’. Here, I am inclined to the second view. The composition, with a total of 310 verses, with eight-syllable continuous rhymes, is divided into nine scenes in which the poet recounts in five steps the history of salvation from the Trinitarian life before the creation of the world to the birth of Christ. The poem was written during the saint’s nine-month stay in Toledo prison. – cf. *Obra de San Juan de la Cruz, Doctor de la Iglesia. Tomo I. Preliminares*. ed. Silverio de Santa Teresa (Burgos: Editorial Monte Carmelo, 1929), 132.

⁷ Srov. Federico Ruiz Salvador, *Introducción a San Juan de la Cruz* (Madrid: BAC, 1968), 162.

The choice of an approach to the analysis of the prose writings faced another difficulty: How to identify passages in the text of the individual writings relating to the Incarnation, possibly inspired by the Fourth gospel? The risks of interpreting the saint's attitude towards the mystery of the Incarnation solely based on passages where he quotes or refers to the Gospel text have been amply revealed in the article by J. Boulet, who draws completely inadequate conclusions from the absence of certain Gospel verses in the saint's treatises. Since John of the Cross gives neither a systematic exposition of the Gospel nor of the dogma of the Incarnation but deals with the spiritual growth of a human person (in the terminology of the sixteenth century, 'the soul') and with the goal towards which he or she is directed, it is to be expected that both the Gospel kerygma and the mystery of the Incarnation would be present in his exposition implicitly rather than explicitly. This is also why most of his references to the Gospel (or its Prologue) illustrate a doctrine of spiritual realities and phenomena that are only loosely or not at all related to the mystery of the Incarnation, and thus do not provide a complete picture of his view of this mystery.

After having studied the various references to the Fourth Gospel in the saint's work in detail, I concluded that it would be very difficult to deduce anything from them concerning his view of the mystery of the Incarnation, so I did not deal with them further and decided to identify the relevant places for analysis in another way. For this purpose, it proved most appropriate to pay attention first to the passages in which the concept of the Incarnation occurs directly and, by exegesis (linguistic and semantic analysis), to get a basic idea of what they say about the author's view of this mystery, and then to focus on the passages where Christ is spoken of as 'the Word' since this title is used exclusively for Christ in the Fourth Gospel and can therefore be understood as an explicit reference to its Christology. This procedure has made it possible to outline a relatively coherent conception of the mystery of the Incarnation in the prose works *The Canticle* (= *The Spiritual Canticle*) and *The Flame* (= *The Living Flame of Love*) and to show the different perspective of *The Ascent* (= *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*). The chosen form of analysis has proved quite inapplicable to *The Night* (= *The Dark Night*), where the concepts of 'Incarnation' and 'Word' do not appear. As an examination of the view of the Incarnation in this work using any other method would be beyond the scope of the article, I have not included it in the analysis. A study of the passages selected according to

these criteria has pointed to the Johannine inspiration of the final chapters of *The Canticle* and the whole of *The Flame*, in whose description of the culminating stages of life in union with God can be observed the influence of the Farewell Discourse (Jn 14–16) and the High Priestly Prayer (Jn 17). In the conclusion of my analytical examination of the saint's prose writings, I have therefore compared his accounts of this phase of the mystical life with the Christology of the Fourth Gospel contained in chapters 14–17.

2. The John-Sanjuanist Vision of the Incarnation in *Romances*

What strikes one at first glance about *Romances* (R) is the remarkable balance between fidelity to the Gospel text and the creative freedom with which the poet processes the Gospel material (and the other sources whose influence is evident in the composition) into an original work of art that reflects an intimate knowledge of the biblical text, a deep mystical insight into the nature of the mystery of the Incarnation, fidelity to the deposit of faith of the Church, and the ability to process the richness of thought of the previous tradition in a new way. For example, in the very first couplet of the poem (R 1,1–2), the poet replaces 'to be' of the Gospel with the full-meaning verbs 'to live' and 'to dwell' ('abide'), terms that carry special significance in the Fourth Gospel because they describe the relationship between the Father and the Son, which serves as the 'matrix' for the relationship between Jesus and the disciple. Other examples include the synthesis of the Gospel statements about the glory of the Son in the Father and the glory of the Father in the Son in the fifth stanza of the first scene: '*Y así toda la gloria del Hijo / es la que en el Padre había / y toda su gloria el Padre / en el Hijo poseía*' (R 1,17–20) or the projection of Jesus' earthly obedience to the Father's will into the Son's assent to a plan of salvation involving Incarnation: '*Mi voluntad es la tuya, / el Hijo le respondía / y la gloria que yo tengo / es tu voluntad ser mía*' (R 7,24–28). However, from the point of view of the mystery of the Incarnation and its role in the process of the soul's union with God, the most important is the Father's declaration of love for the Son (R 2,11–14), which again resonates with Johannine Christology,⁸ but above all in which we find the germ of the doctrine developed later in *The Ascent* (A): The Father can

⁸ Cf. Jn 3,35; Jn 5,20a; Jn 10,17.

only love the one who resembles the Son; following Christ is thus the basis of the path to the union⁹ as Jesus states in the Gospel in his Farewell Discourse.¹⁰

The list of other parallels could be longer, but I believe that the examples given have sufficiently shown how the poem is imbued with the thought of the Johannine school and how it copies the Gospel view of the mystery of the Incarnation. It presents a *de facto* artistic-theological synthesis of the message of the Fourth Gospel and adopts an original approach to it: it seems to ‘project’ what Jesus says in the Gospel about himself and his relationship to the Father onto the timeless existence of God ‘prior’ to the creation and the Incarnation that the Evangelist has in mind when he opens his work with the term ‘in the beginning’. In the poem, John of the Cross glimpses precisely this ‘moment’: the timeless eternity – the eternal lingering of the Word with God in an intimate relationship (conversation) to which (before the Incarnation) no outsider has access. In this remarkable access to the mystery of the incarnate Word, he opens a ‘porthole’ into eternity, where the Word permanently ‘rests in the bosom of the Father’ (Jn 1,18). The unusual perspective from which the Gospel message is viewed is gained from contemplating the Evangelist’s idea of the Incarnation: that Jesus – the eternal Word – came into the world to ‘reveal the name of the Father’ to people (Jn 17,6) and ‘give eternal life’ (Jn 17,2), which consists in their knowing the Father and Jesus Christ sent by him (cf. Jn 17,3). As the incarnate God, then, he is the ‘meeting point’ of eternity with human history – by the unity with the Father, whom he reveals by his dialogical existence, he is himself the ‘window’ through which one can glimpse the relations that prevailed between the Father and the Son ‘before the foundation of the world’ (Jn 17,24), he is ‘the way’ (Jn 14,6) leading to the Father with whom he has been and to whom he returns after the completion of his mission (Jn 14,28; 16,10; 17,11–13). In the form imprinted by the Evangelist, the mystery of the Incarnation becomes for John of the Cross a kind of ‘telescope’ that allows him to look beyond time and space to where he can see the glory that the Son had with the Father.

Also, the very image of the Father ‘speaking’ to the Son in eternity follows the Evangelist’s way of expressing himself: Jesus reveals what

⁹ Cf. 1A 13,3–4 a 2V 7,8–9.

¹⁰ Cf. Jn 14,15a; Jn 14,21; Jn 15,9–10.

he ‘heard’ (Jn 15,15) from the Father, even the very words of the Father (Jn 14,10). As in his Farewell Discourse Jesus makes it clear that by ‘words’ he means ‘commandments’,¹¹ or his love for his disciples,¹² which mirrors the Father’s love for himself (cf. Jn 15,9) and is manifested not only in words but above all in deeds,¹³ the term ‘word’ in the context of the Gospel means much more than a mere utterance; it includes all the manifestations (speech and action) by which Jesus enters into a relationship with his disciples and reveals (gives) himself to them as the Father reveals (gives) himself to him. Just as the Evangelist chose the image of ‘speaking’ to express a relationship of love that manifests itself in a unity of will and a willingness to give himself unconditionally, so does John of the Cross in the second scene of *Romances*, where he styles the expression of the Father’s love for the Son as ‘speaking’ – an eternal declaration of love.

3. The Term *Incarnation* in the Prose Works

In the saint’s prose, the term Incarnation appears a total of eleven times,¹⁴ and only in *The Canticle*. It usually occurs as part of the phrase ‘mystery of the incarnation’ (whether singular or plural), which is usually repeated multiple times in a single passage. In sum, there are four occurrences, but their strategic placement within the work is worth noting.

Let us recall that *The Canticle* in its second redaction¹⁵ becomes a thoughtful treatise on the soul’s journey toward the union with God, from its beginnings, when the soul’s desire for God is awakened and she begins to follow it, to the culminating stage of union, when she experiences the indwelling of the persons of the Trinity and the Trinitarian

¹¹ Cf. Jn 14,15.21.23–24 and 15,10.

¹² Cf. Jn 15,9–15.

¹³ Cf. Jn 13,1–17 and J 15,15.

¹⁴ Cf. Juan Luis Astigarraga, Agustí Borrell, and Javier Martín de Lucas, eds., *Concordancias de los escritos de San Juan de la Cruz* (Roma: Teresianum, 1990), 689–690. Quotations from identical or similar passages in the first and second editions of *The Spiritual Canticle* are counted only once.

¹⁵ The commentaries on the ‘Song of the Soul and the Bridegroom’ and on the poem ‘Oh, Living Flame of Love’ have survived in two versions (redactions). Critics now consider both to be authentic. While in the ‘Song’ the author made a rather extensive revision consisting of adding a new stanza to the poem (hence a new chapter) and rearranging the original order of the stanzas, in the ‘Flame’ he mostly limited himself to reworking, adding, or, on the contrary, omitting some parts of the text.

breathing (the exhalation of the Spirit between the Father and the Son, in which she shares through her union with Christ). From this point of view, it is interesting that the mention of the Incarnation appears for the first time in the commentary in the fifth stanza of the poem (SC 5,3), which describes the initial stages of the spiritual journey. The longing for God as ‘beloved’ impels the soul to seek him, which is accomplished at this stage by discovering the reflection of his beauty in creation. At the same time, the soul grows in the awareness that creation is not an end, for God ‘made creatures by the way’,¹⁶ since he was working towards a much grander goal – the Incarnation of the Word. In comparison, the significance of the other signs of God’s presence in creation pales, though the whole of creation reflects his attributes in some way and so bears witness to him. The moment of comparison is of the utmost importance for a correct understanding of the author’s position. The author certainly does not underestimate the majesty and value of creation as a magnificent work of God but only emphasises the far more perfect possibility of an encounter that God offered to man when he stooped from the heights of his transcendence, embraced human existence, and thus infinitely transcended the horizon in which the mutual relationship between man and God unfolds.¹⁷ In the next point of the commentary on the fifth stanza of *The Canticle* (SC 5,4), the emphasis on the Incarnation as the key moment in salvation history is even more explicit: by the very Incarnation, the Son of God raises humanity and with it all creation to a supernatural, divine dignity.

The mention of the Incarnation two stanzas later (SC 7,3) already catches the soul at the stage when she moves from seeking the Beloved through the beauty of creation to a deeper knowledge of Him alone,

¹⁶ SC 5,3. The idea outlined in SC 5:3–4 can be better understood thanks to *The Romances*. According to them, God’s creative intention is directed from the beginning to the ‘marriage’ of the Son with the Spouse – the Incarnation; for this reason the Father creates the world as the Spouse’s dwelling (a palace divided into two ‘dwellings’) and the Spouse ‘in the likeness of the Son’ (Rom 7,10). All that precedes the Incarnation, however magnificent in itself, only prepares for this climactic moment of human history, in which the Son is conformed to his betrothed by taking on flesh, i.e., human destiny. The created world, in all its splendour, cannot bear comparison with the splendour of Trinitarian love, whose overflowing fullness gives it rise as a ‘palace for the betrothed’ (R 4,5), whom the Father and the Son intend to receive into their communion.

¹⁷ This total disproportion between Creator and creature is only briefly outlined by the saint here and is dealt with in more detail in the Exodus, where he firmly denies the capacity of creatures and created values to become a means of union with God (cf. 1A 4,4ff.).

which is revealed to her in the works of the ‘Incarnation of the Word’. From the context, it may be inferred with a good deal of certainty that the phrase ‘the works of the incarnation of the Word’ means the whole earthly life of Jesus from conception to death and resurrection, as recorded in the Gospels and other books of Scripture since the whole of Scripture bears witness to Christ. This broad view of the mystery of the Incarnation is offered above all by *Romances*, in which humanity’s hope of salvation lies in the expectation that the Word-Begotten will become like men, dwell with them, converse with them, eat and drink with them, and remain with them ‘until the end of the age’ (R 4,37–48). The detailed enumeration of activities – referring partly to the opening of John’s first letter (1Jn 1,1) and partly to the Gospel’s ‘dwelling’ of the Word among men (Jn 1,14) – underlines the complete likeness: the betrothed will remain no stranger to the betrothed’s lot, identifying with her in everything and accompanying her in everything. This humility, generosity, and love of God is contemplated by John of the Cross in the Gospel text and is always in his mind when he speaks of the richness, splendour and grandeur of the mystery of the Incarnation.

In this spirit, then, it is to be understood that a deeper knowledge of the Beloved is made available to the soul ‘in the works of the incarnation of the Word’ which ‘wounds’ it with love, i.e., disposes it to the union. It is also worth noting that this is not a knowledge that the soul acquires by her activity, but it is – as wounding – granted or rather (since it is a grace of God) ‘bestowed’ upon her through the theological virtues. In his commentary on the second verse of the stanza (SC 7,7), the author describes how the soul, like all lovers, is eager to learn as much as possible about the Beloved so that she greedily absorbs everything that is told about him, because the more she learns about him, the more she will be able to enjoy the ‘charms’ of his Incarnation.¹⁸

¹⁸ The disposition just described, which the soul has adopted (or which has prevailed in it as a result of the ‘wounding of love’ – the initial infused outburst of mystical love), is strikingly reminiscent of the advice John of the Cross gives at the close of the first book of *The Ascent* to him, who by his efforts would hasten the onset of the next stage, the night of sense (1A 13,3), so a little note about this work, which deals with the initial stage of the mystical life in greater detail than *The Canticle*, is need. For this stage of the spiritual journey, the Mystical Teacher recommends that the disciple abides by Christ with all the strength of his will, making him (meaning: his earthly life, as we learn about him from the Gospel) the model of all his actions, and, following his example, renounce, out of love, his pleasure in all things unless they are for the greater honour and glory of God (cf. 1A 13,4).

In proportion as the soul grows more in love, she desires to conform to the Beloved and to be like Him in everything, so that she unconsciously seeks the Beloved in everything and behind everything, listens attentively to everything she can learn about Him, and longs to be even closer to Him and to be fully united with Him. At each stage of the journey to the union, the betrothed's 'belonging' to the incarnate Christ (i.e., the way she understands and experiences the mystery of the Incarnation) takes different forms, as evidenced by the references to the Incarnation in the fifth and seventh chapters of *The Canticle*. Whereas during the purificatory (meditative)¹⁹ stage the soul purposely seeks to focus her attention on the mystery of the Incarnation and learns to follow Christ – the incarnate Word – by recalling through contemplation how much the Incarnation transcends the beauty and majesty of creation, in the illuminative (contemplative) stage a deeper knowledge of God's works – especially the Incarnation – is communicated to her through contemplation without her own doing.

Another change of perspective occurs in the unifying stage, which begins with a spiritual betrothal (chapter thirteen of *The Canticle*) and culminates in a spiritual marriage (chapter twenty-two). The mysteries of the Incarnation, which were previously made available to the soul primarily as 'knowledge' about the Betrothed, now become a commonwealth of both: the soul experiences them directly, no longer as intellectual knowledge, but as an 'experience' that the Betrothed 'shares' with her – making her experience and feel how they are realised in her and what she shares in them. The interpretation of the twenty-third chapter, in the introduction to which the author notes that the union reveals to the soul 'the sweet mysteries of the Incarnation and the ways and forms of human redemption' (SC 23,1) and then focuses on their most proper core – the redemption of the corrupted human nature by the cross of Christ – reaffirms that the saint calls the whole of Jesus' earthly life the Incarnation by which God's saving action – the 'betrothal' of the Son to human nature (the betrothed) – is accomplished.

¹⁹ John of the Cross puts his interpretation of the spiritual journey in the Canticle in the context of the traditional division of the process of union into purifying, illuminating and unifying stages before he begins his commentary on the poem (SC Theme), and then in his commentary on the twenty-second stanza (SC 22,3), he specifies which stanzas correspond to each stage. The purifying stage is described in the first five stanzas, the illuminating stage is dealt with in stanzas 6–12, and from stanza 13 onwards it is the unifying stage.

The fact that God became incarnate is the basic point from which the whole doctrine of the Mystical Teacher is derived: the history of salvation, the existence of the world and the possibility of knowing God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable communion of mutual indwelling in love. While the depth of his reverence for this mystery is most clearly evidenced in *Romances*, in which he recounts the Incarnation of the Son and the consequent elevation of his betrothed – the humanity and by extension the entire created world to the Son's level as the sole reason for God's creative activity, his fascination with this mystery is also evident in the final passages of *The Canticle*. In the commentary on the thirty-seventh stanza, this mystery is the source of the hope with which the soul anticipates the transition from earthly life to the blissful belonging to God, the moment of the fulfilment of her desire to understand and appropriate it (i.e., the mystery of the Incarnation) in all its splendour and fullness, to delight in it and enjoy it as God himself delights in it and enjoys it.²⁰ He even suggests that it is this full 'understanding' and appreciation of the Incarnation that constitutes the essence of her bliss in the hereafter.²¹

From what has been said, we can conclude that this mystery represents, in the conception of John of the Cross, the centre of gravity of the spiritual life – the core from which all the spiritual life of the Christian derives, and the source of all progress on the spiritual path. It encompasses the whole of God's redemptive work accomplished during Jesus' earthly life; it is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The presence of this mystery at the very foundation of his teaching is also evidenced by the emphasis he places on the uniqueness of Christ's mediatorial role from the very beginning of the spiritual journey.

4. Christ as the Word

In the context of examining the saint's relationship to the mystery of the Incarnation, it is worth noting that he quite often refers to Jesus as 'the Word', which cannot be understood as anything other than a direct reference to the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel (Jn 1,1–18) since only in that Gospel does the Word have a uniquely personal character and

²⁰ Cf. SC 36,5.

²¹ Cf. SC 37,1–2.

is identical with the person of Jesus Christ. The term ‘Verbo’ (Word)²² is used as a proper name for Christ twenty-one times in *The Canticle*, eleven times in *The Flame*, and once towards the end of *The Night*. In *The Ascent*, which differs markedly from the remaining writings in its scholastic method of interpretation, the appellation does not occur; however, an exposition devoted to the completeness and exclusiveness of revelation in Christ designates it by the term ‘Palabra’ (Statement, Word, Speech).

The first 6 occurrences in *The Canticle* (nearly a third of the total) are in the first chapter, the next 7 in the chapters at the end of the book (chapters 35 to 38), and 3 in chapter 5, which also contains the first explicit mention of the Incarnation. In *The Flame*, most occurrences are in the second chapter (paragraphs 17–20, where ‘the Word’ appears 7 times, including 4 times in the series of exclamations in paragraph 17), with three others in the final chapter 4 and one mention of ‘the Word’ in chapter 3.²³ Rarely does the saint speak of Christ as merely the Word, without further names and attributions. In *The Canticle*, he oscillates between the combination ‘the Word, the Son of God’ and ‘the Word, (her) Spouse’, and in two places he even uses all three designations simultaneously. Twice he abandons this scheme in favour of the phrase ‘the divine Word’. In the remaining four instances, ‘the Word’ forms part of the phrase ‘the incarnation of the Word’ or ‘the union of the Word’. In *The Flame*, the combination ‘Word, Son of God’ occurs only twice, and ‘Word – Betrothed’ is referred to once, in all other cases there is only ‘the Word’ without further specification. *The Night* uses the atypical combination ‘Verbo Cristo’ (Christ – the Word).

The first passage referring to Christ as ‘the Word’ is found at the beginning of the commentary (SC 1,2). By the simultaneous use of the expressions ‘Word’ – ‘Son of God’ – ‘Betrothed’, the author refers to the different dimensions of Christ’s being: ‘Word’, due to the link with the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, recalls the Incarnation, i.e., the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ, by which God enters into dialogue with man and overcomes the distance between the divine and the human. ‘Son of God’ refers to his being as a second divine person defined by his relationship to the Father and

²² This term always appears in the saint’s writings with a capital letter as the proper name of the second divine person (the Son-Soul’s Spouse).

²³ We count the parallel locations of the two editions of the same work only once.

hence to the mystery of the Trinity. ‘Betrothed’ characterises who he is to the soul of the disciple with whom he wants to unite in love. All three together capture and characterise the person of the Beloved to whom the soul turns in the poem. The soul becomes aware and present to each aspect of his being in contemplation, and in the course of the spiritual journey, she also experiences it more and more deeply and intensely in proportion as she gradually conforms to the Beloved, so that he can increasingly share with her the ‘mystery’ of his being.

In a follow-up interpretation of the first stanza of the poem (SC 1,3–6), the saint introduces the central idea of the writing: The Beloved, whom the soul seeks, is hidden ‘in the bosom of the Father’ (Jn 1,18), where the Father ‘feeds’ on him in eternal glory, and at the same time, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, dwells secretly in the deepest interior of the soul, into which the soul in love is to plunge in order to find him. The whole passage is distinctly underlaid by the theology of the Fourth Gospel, which is shown, among other things, by the fact that John of the Cross uses the term ‘the Word’ almost every time he refers to Christ in it. The statements about the Word in the first chapter of *The Canticle* can be summarised as follows: to the Word-Christ the soul’s longing for union is directed, he is her ‘Beloved’, yet his divine nature (hidden in the ‘Father’s bosom’) prevents her from an immediate encounter with him, so she begs the Father to let her feed on him as the Father himself ‘feeds’ on him.

Another aspect of John of the Cross’s view of the Word-Christ is revealed in the note before the stanza in the fifth chapter of *The Canticle* (SC 5,1). It recapitulates New Testament theology concerning the role of the Son in creation:²⁴ God created the world ‘by his Wisdom [...] and that is the Word, the only begotten Son’. Further interpretation then implies that the Word is the ‘form’ of creation, his likeness imprinted on creation mirrors the uncreated beauty of the Word, is an imperfect reflection of it, and refers the seeking soul to it. Similarly, the conclusion of the eleventh chapter (SC 11,12) speaks of ‘the Word’: The soul longs for the completion of the process that is to conform her to the One whose ‘sketch’ she bears within herself, who is ‘her Spouse, the Word, the Son of God’.

²⁴ Cf. J 1,3; Col 1,16–17; Heb 1,2–3.

In chapters 14–15, ‘the Word’ occurs as part of the definition of spiritual betrothal,²⁵ and in the chapter on the intimacy of spiritual marriage, ‘the Word’ becomes the bed ‘into which (the soul) rests through [...] union’ (SC 24,3). The soul has already come to know her betrothed intimately at this stage of the spiritual journey and continues to do so. She can see the mystery of the Incarnation as the manifestation of her Betrothed’s infinite love, with which he gives himself to her in his entirety, discovering ever new riches in him, whose beauty and depth arouse her amazement and nourish her desire for a full knowledge of all the mysteries of the Beloved and for the total union with him to be realised in the life to come. Her fascination with this mystery is depicted in the final chapters of *The Canticle* (especially 35–39) and *The Flame*.

5. The Glory of the Incarnate Word

The mystery of the Incarnation is revealed in the closing chapters of *The Canticle* as the centre around which the mystical life of the soul revolves. The mystery of Christ’s being as the Incarnate Word appears to her as ‘a very rich mine with many caverns full of treasures’ (SC 37,3), where she continually discovers more and more treasures and never exhausts all its riches. Because she longs to penetrate the deepest roots of the mystery of the Incarnation, she longs for eternity, where she will be able to ‘understand the very deep ways and eternal mysteries of his Incarnation’ (SC 37,1).

We learn three things about the mystery as such from the passage:

1. Everything that is known about God begins and ends in Christ, in whom the second divine person mysteriously meets and unites with human nature.
2. The mystery of the hypostatic union is closely related to other mysteries revealed by the revelation in Christ, namely, the mysterious union of men in God and God’s purposes for the salvation of humankind.
3. The immensity of the mysteries of Christ (i.e., the mystery of the Incarnation and all that pertains to it) far exceeds human ability to penetrate them, so that the soul can endlessly discover their

²⁵ In parallel, the saint uses the term ‘the Word’ as part of the definition in *The Flame* (3,25) – here he also speaks of a ‘spiritual betrothal to the Word’.

inexhaustible riches in their heights and depths and rejoice in them, ‘which is no small part of her blessedness’ (SC 37,1).

It cannot be overlooked, however, as the saint points out further on in the sixth point, that this penetration and discovery of new dimensions of the Divine mysteries is not the activity of the soul, but rather the activity of the Spouse within her, for through it her transformation into him is manifested (cf. SC 37,6), which gives the soul the capacity to know and love the Betrothed as he knows and loves himself, which is explained both in the previous – thirty-sixth – chapter (especially point 5) and in even greater detail in the following two chapters (38–39). It must be remembered, however, as the author reiterates in the note to the thirty-eighth Canto, that the immersion in the mystery of the Incarnation described in the previous two chapters is experienced by the united soul rather than in hints since it is to be fully realised only in eternity, where ‘it will be transformed in beauty by the union of the Word with humanity’ (SC 38,1).

Already united to her Betrothed – the Word – by the grace of spiritual marriage, she experiences a foretaste of heavenly bliss and thus knows clearly and surely what she expects in the hereafter: This is the adoption as sons of God, who truly say to God what the Son himself said in St. John to the eternal Father: ‘All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. (Jn 17:10)’. The distinct influence of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel in this passage can be appreciated if, in addition to the Johannine concept of the mutual indwelling of lovers in one another, we also notice in the author’s description of the sharing of ‘beauty’ between the bride and the Bridegroom the echo of Jesus’ prayer (Jn 17). The plea ‘let them behold my glory’ (Jn 17,24) underscores the entire passage in which the betrothed expresses her hope to ‘behold’ and share the ‘beauty’ of the Bridegroom of Christ. The believer’s desire to behold the ‘beauty’ of the Son of God mirrors Jesus’ desire to share the ‘glory’ of divine sonship with his disciples. The Johannine δόξα (‘glory’; also ‘radiance’, ‘splendour’) becomes, in John of the Cross, the ‘beauty’ and ‘grace’ of the Incarnation, but its essence remains the loving communion of unity between the Father and the Son, which, through the mysterious plan of the Incarnation, spills over into creation. The Johannine inspiration of the last chapters of the Song is confirmed by a passage in the penultimate chapter (SC 39:5), which clarifies the ultimate goal of the Incarnation: God has offered humanity an incredible

gain through the Incarnation – ‘the power/ability to become children of God’, i.e., to participate in God’s life by participating in the Trinitarian outbreathing of the Holy Spirit.

John of the Cross writes at least two of his prose works (*The Canticle* and *The Flame* (LF)) with the intention of showing his readers the splendour of this gift and thereby motivating them to respond appropriately so that the promises of Jesus in John’s Gospel can be fulfilled in them. By reference to them, he also seeks to vindicate his doctrine of the mystically experienced presence of divine persons within the believer against sceptics who regard it as too optimistic. He considers the defence so important that he does not hesitate to repeat the reference to the Gospel again in his commentary on the first stanza of the poem (LF 1,15).

Although the number of explicit quotations of the Fourth Gospel is not high in *The Flame*, their strategic placement in the text and their interpretation show that the entire commentary is permeated by its kerygma, especially the Farewell Discourse and the Prayer for the Disciples. In particular, the opening words of the commentary on the first stanza (LF 1,1), quoting Jn 7:38 and implicitly alluding to Jn 7,39, can be seen as evidence of a strong Johannine influence, by which he makes it clear that by ‘rivers of living water’ he means the Holy Spirit. It is precisely this ‘flowing out’ of the Spirit from within the soul, i.e., his working in her, that the saint is about to speak of (cf. LF 1,3–5). Leaving aside the extensive excursus on spiritual guides in chapter 3, the whole work may be considered an ode to the fulfilment of the promises of the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of John’s Gospel. His characterisation of the Holy Spirit’s action in the soul (LF 1,3–4) offers an example of how Jesus’ words about the Advocate (Jn 14,15–16.26), whom the Father will send to those who love him at his request, and about the eternal life that consists in the knowledge of the Father and the Son (Jn 17,3), crystallise in the saint’s mystical experience.

At this stage of mystical union, the soul becomes more and more aware that the mystery of the Incarnation – meaning the whole of Jesus’ earthly existence and also His pre-existence as the second divine person – constitutes a kind of ‘gateway’ to all the other mysteries of God and therefore desires to penetrate it as deeply as possible, which, however, she cannot do (especially during earthly life) because of its immense breadth, depth and complexity, so that she will always have something to discover and admire in Christ. To gaze upon him and to revel in his

‘beauty’ (or ‘glory’) forever is her idea of bliss, the foretaste of which she already tastes as she is brought, through her union with the Word (the Bridegroom), into the communion of love between the Father and the Son and participates in the exhalation of the Spirit between them.

John of the Cross consciously bases his description of the life of union on the Fourth Gospel, especially (but not exclusively) on chapters 14–17, in which the evangelist presents a synthesis of Jesus’ public ministry in the form of farewell discourses and prayers for the disciples. The influence of the Gospel is evident even where the saint does not explicitly quote it. The thought of the Johannine school is manifested in *The Flame* by the appreciation of the greatness of the gift given to humanity by the Incarnation and by the emphasis on the destination of man, which, according to the kerygma of the Fourth Gospel, is the invitation to eternal life in communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

In this article, I have briefly presented some of the findings I have reached. This is not a definitive and complete answer to the question of the role of the mystery of the Incarnation in the teaching of John of the Cross or in his mystical experience; rather, it is a first attempt to explore this aspect of his teaching more closely. The analysis has confirmed the hypothesis that the saint’s view of the mystery of the incarnation is rooted in Johannine Christology and plays an important role in his doctrine, but it has left several unanswered questions (including the question of how the central role of the mystery of the incarnation in the life of the Christian is expressed in the commentary on the poem *One Dark Night*) that leave room for further research in this area.

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**ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE
THEOLOGICA 2024, VOL. 14, NO. 1**

Charles University
Karolinum Press
Ovocný trh 560/5, 116 36 Praha 1
Czech Republic
www.karolinum.cz
Typeset and printed by Karolinum Press

Published twice a year
ISSN 1804-5588 (Print)
ISSN 2336-5398 (Online)
MK ČR E 19775